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VITALI KLITSCHKO

Is He About To Be Cut Down To Size?

APRIL 2011

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The Scorpion And The Frog

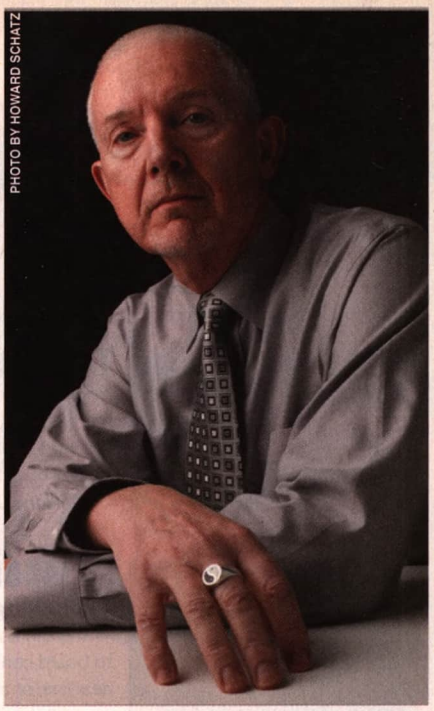
PHOTO BY HOWARD SCHATZ

One never quite knows what to expect when you turn on your computer in the morning and check out the boxing websites. Occasionally, it's good news, such as a fight you've been eager to see has been made. But more often than not, it's some outrage or another that makes your blood boil and your head spin.

Take, for example, the WBC's recent announcement that world middleweight champion Sergio Martinez had been declared "Champion Emeritus" and Sebastian Zbik anointed the new WBC middleweight titleholder.

As regular readers know, THE RING has been at war with the ever-expanding list of alphabet organizations for decades. We've made some headway, but nowhere near as much as I had hoped. This latest injustice perpetrated by the WBC is proof positive that the lunatics are still running the asylum.

But you know what? It's not the fault of these nefarious organizations. Like the scorpion said to the frog when he stung him halfway across the river, "I could not help myself. It is my nature."

Just as you can't expect the scorpion not to sting, you can't expect the alphabet gangs to abandon their unethical, money-grabbing ways. It is their nature.

These days, my anger is directed toward another, much larger group, without whose help the alphabet bandits would not exist. I'm talking about darn near everybody involved in the industry: promoters, managers, television networks, boxing commissions, much of the media, a growing number of fans, and a majority of the fighters themselves.

All of the above are enablers and co-conspirators in a gigantic scam that has alienated much of the general public and plunged boxing into a sewer from which it will never emerge unless people wake up and start doing the right thing.

The disreputable behavior of the various sanctioning bodies does not take place in a vacuum. The shafting of Martinez and the installation of Zbik was not just a whim. There is a sinister method behind the madness.

Instead, it was a scheme to remove the WBC belt from Martinez (euphemistically called an "upgrade" by the WBC *and* Martinez' manager Sampson Lewkowicz) and hopefully find a way to place it around the waist of favorite son, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. This was painfully obvious when the WBC also ordered Zbik to make the first defense of a title he never actually won against—you guessed it—Chavez.

The WBC now has at least four versions of so-called champions for every weight class: champion emeritus, champion, interim champion, and the ever-popular champion in recess. And by the time you read this, they might have added a few more. After all, the more champions, the more sanctioning fees.

Many fighters and their camps are attracted to these bogus titles simply because they think the trinkets will advance their careers and financial well-being. But they seldom stop to think about the long-term ramifications to the sport in general and themselves in particular.

Martinez was not the first to support an alphabet organization by paying sanctioning fees only to have the very same organization turn around and bite him in the ass when it became expedient to do so. He surely won't be the last.

The ironic part is that Martinez, as one of six fighters currently recognized by THE RING as world champions, had alternatives. Instead, he misguidedly went along with the ruse, making him both victim and accomplice to the sort of illicit nonsense that has almost killed the sport he loves.

There is a simple solution to this seemingly impossible predicament. Here it is: Ignore them, and they will go away. Otherwise, you're part of the problem.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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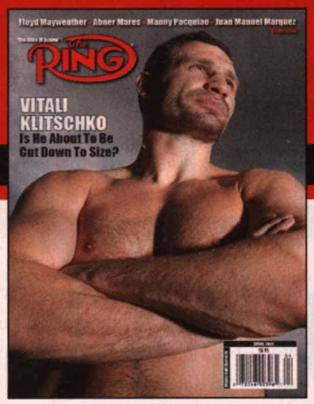

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32 FIVE STARS AND THEIR GREATEST THREATS

Manny Pacquiao, Floyd Mayweather, Sergio Martinez, Juan Manuel Marquez, and Wladimir Klitschko are among the best fighters in the world and face unique challenges in and out of the ring. THE RING breaks down what obstacles could be ahead in 2011.

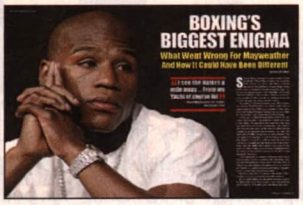
By William Dettloff

52 JABBING AT FATHER TIME

Unlocking The Secrets Of Late-Career Success

"Time can also be a silent enemy. Whether it is travelers hustling to board connecting flights, businessmen negotiating under a hard deadline, or athletes compelled to produce game-changing heroics, each passing second exerts a crushing pressure to perform."

By Lee Groves



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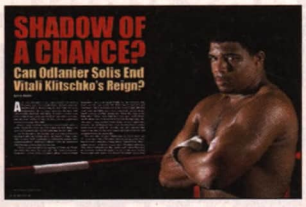
What Went Wrong For Mayweather And How It Could Have Been Different

"Unfortunately, a number of factors have kept Mayweather from reaching the absolute, unquestioned pinnacle of the sport, not the least of which was that Manny Pacquiao draws as well if not better, is a more exciting performer, and possesses a more interesting back-story."

By Don Stradley



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Can Odlanier Solis End Vitali Klitschko's Reign?

"Even though Solis is relatively untested as a pro, there are some observers who believe he can not only give Klitschko his toughest fight in many years but actually upset him and take his alphabet belt."

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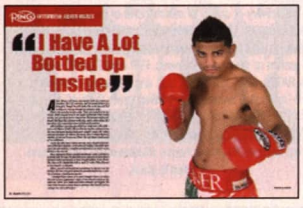
From Boos To The British Title In Just Nine Fights

"In nine fights, DeGale had proved that, unlike Audley Harrison, he knew how to built on an amateur career that began at the age of nine when his father sent him to the nearby boxing gym in Harlesden, London."

By Gavin Evans



82 THE RING INTERVIEW: ABNER MARES

"I Have A Lot Bottled Up Inside"

"Many fighters have the proverbial raw back-story. The difference with Mares is that his reaches extremes even the most hardcore boxing back-story seldom touches. Try sifting through garbage for dinner or going days without knowing whether or not you'll even eat."

By Joseph Santoliquito

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WHO ARE MANNY PACQUIAO'S GREATEST THREATS?
Find out on Page 32

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

OPENING SHOT

MESSAGE ON THE WALL

Professional chef Louise Mitchell poses at the Holyrood ABC gym in Edinburgh, Scotland. She recently became the first female boxer to represent her country when the Scottish amateur squad faced Wales in the Bring It Back Home Internationals. Unfortunately for Mitchell, she lost to Charlene Jones, proving that some women are indeed stronger than others.

PHOTO BY JEFF J MITCHELL/GETTY IMAGES

COME OUT WRITING

KING SERGIO
Instead of taking easy defenses, middleweight champion Sergio Martinez is happy to accommodate today's best 160-pounders. Reader Barry Rabbitts considers Martinez a breath of fresh air and hopes other champions and titleholders follow his example.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

LETTER OF THE MONTH

What Real Champions Do

What a breath of fresh air Sergio Martinez has become. In a year of "handbags at 20 paces," with the likes of David Haye and Floyd Mayweather stalling hugely anticipated, career-defining fights, the Argentine middleweight kingpin has actively chased down the toughest challenges available. In choosing, or at the very least accepting, undefeated Ukrainian Sergei Dzinziruk as his next opponent, he continues to do so. While the top-flight 154-pounder is an unknown commodity to all but hardcore fans, he poses arguably the greatest threat to Martinez below 168 pounds. Only red-hot Russian contender Dmitry Pirog or fellow unbeaten junior middleweight James Kirkland could possibly convince me otherwise. Much like the Klitschko brothers, compatriots and former stablemates, Dzinziruk is extremely well versed in keeping opponents at bay, fighting with both discipline and intelligence. A sharp, if not destructive puncher, with good range and counterpunching skills, he may prove to be the antidote to Martinez' flair, athleticism, and power. Regardless of the outcome, and I see the champion as a slight favorite, it is a pleasantly surprising and extremely competitive matchup. All credit to both fighters in taking the bout, in particular Sergio Martinez, who is clearly looking to carve a legacy worthy of a real champion in what has become a period of hot-air and no-shows in the fight game.

BARRY RABBITTS
baznrab@yahoo.com

Dr. Goodman: Pro & Con

This letter is in reference to Margaret Goodman's column in the February 2011 issue regarding the Vitali Klitschko-Shannon Briggs fight in Germany. This was a horrible mismatch that endangered the life of Briggs. It was criminal conduct by the referee, the doctor, Briggs' cornermen, the German commission, and the WBC. Boxing's image is becoming worse every minute.

I suggest that THE RING start a serious and continuous campaign to establish a National Boxing Commission to try to stop the abuses and corruption of boxing.

MICHAEL ERICE
Falls Church, VA

It seems like almost every time I read Dr. Goodman's column in THE RING she is obsessing about head injuries and other risks to boxers. Well, Dr. Goodman, I have a newsflash for you. No one is forcing boxers to box, and they know exactly what the risks are before getting in the ring. These risks are just some of the reasons they get paid big bucks. Head trauma is a major consequence of boxing. If you can't handle that, then get out of the boxing game, be quiet, and leave the sport alone.

BRIAN VAN HOOSE, MD
Catlettsburg, KY

PAY-PER-VIEW BLUES
Reader Rudolpho Marioni is understandably upset by the fact that Canadian fans have to watch Jean Pascal (picture) and Lucian Bute on PPV, while US fans watch on subscription cable networks such as Showtime and HBO.

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Unfair To Canadian Fans

As a proud Canadian, I remember when I could watch the careers of Canadian fighters such as Arturo Gatti and Willie de Wit on free or cable TV. Recently, the fights of Lucian Bute and Jean Pascal have only been on pay-per-view in Canada. I can't stomach paying for fights that should be offered on cable TV, which I already pay for. Why, as a Canadian, must I pay more to see my country's fighters than I would if I lived in the United States? Only fights such as a possible Pacquiao-Mayweather are deserving of being on PPV. And if those two fighters continue to wait, even that fight should not be on PPV.

RUDOLPHO MARIONI
Windsor, ON

Delayed Gratification

I am a boxing fan through and true. There has been so much hype as to why Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao have not come to a mutual agreement. Fans deserve to see this match materialize. Do we not? However, as a huge fan, just like many of you out there, I cannot help myself saying Mayweather is without a doubt the pound-for-pound king. But that's just my opinion. We all have them. Anyway, I believe they are both ("Pac Man" and "Money") sitting back and laughing because the longer they keep us waiting, the more anxious to pay ridiculous PPV prices we become. Well, to the powers that be, just don't keep us waiting too long. After all it's "just business," is it not?

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E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided. Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

The Only Belt That Counts

I just watched *Rocky III* for the first time in about 20 years. I noticed he was wearing his RING magazine championship belt when he had his charity fight with Thunder Lips (Hulk Hogan). It's the belt that says you're the real deal. Real or fictional, THE RING belt says it all!

JOHN ARMSTRONG
Troy, NY ■

CRITICAL SUCCESS
Actor Holt McCallany nails an opponent in a scene from FX's *Lights Out*

Strong Reviews, Shaky Ratings For *Lights Out*

In the fall of 2010, cable network FX premiered a series called *Terriers*, a buddy private-eye show that drew praise from the critics but terrible ratings, debuting with just 1.6 million viewers and never improving upon that number. FX had no choice but to cancel *Terriers* after one season.

Lights Out, a new FX drama set in the world of boxing, garnered positive reviews leading up to its January 11 premiere, but only 1.5 million viewers tuned in for that first episode. If the ratings continue along this path, it's hard to imagine FX giving it any longer of a leash than it did *Terriers*. And that would be a shame because *Lights Out* is an entertaining, well-conceived show featuring characters who have stories to tell beyond the initial 13 episodes.

Here's the single-sentence plot synopsis: Retired heavyweight champ turned family man Patrick "Lights" Leary (played by little-known Hollywood veteran and lifelong boxing enthusiast Holt McCallany) has major financial problems and unfinished business in the ring, putting him on the path toward a comeback at age 40. It's hard when watching *Lights Out* not to flash back at times to *Rocky V* and *Rocky Balboa*, both of which dealt with a heavyweight champ's struggles to stay retired. And it's impossible for even the biggest *Lights Out* fan to deny that the show mines familiar boxing-fiction territory, from dirty promoters to mob influence to cocky champions to brain damage.

But what's different is the size of the screen it appears on and the freedom that allows *Lights Out*. On a serialized television series, the story has more opportunity for twists and turns, the characters more potential for depth, and *Lights Out* takes full advantage of that. The lead character grows more compelling with each episode, a credit to the writers and to McCallany, who nails the part.

The same can't be said for actor Pablo Schreiber, a weak link as Leary's brother/manager, Johnny. Also, while Catherine McCormack does a fine job as Leary's wife, Theresa, the character is a wet blanket for the ages. The good news is that, because they have 13 episodes to peel back her layers, she's at least a multidimensional wet blanket.

The show is far from perfect—as you know if you've seen the end of the fourth episode, when *Lights Out* enters *Bloodsport* territory with an absurd underground MMA fight. But the great majority of the time, *Lights Out* is realistic and highly entertaining. On a network known for rarely misfiring, this is another quality show. Let's just hope the early ratings numbers prove to be a flash knockdown and *Lights Out* can rally for a second season.

—Eric Raskin

Little Floyd And Uncle Roger Go To Court

Those hoping the trial of Floyd Mayweather would get underway quickly were disappointed on January 24 when his evidence hearing was reset for Monday, March 10.

According to The Associated Press' report, the postponement was allowed by Las Vegas Justice of the Peace Melissa Saragosa after Mayweather's lawyer, Karen Winckler, sought to allow her law partner, Richard Wright, time to get involved. Prosecutor Lisa Luzaich did not oppose the delay.

Mayweather is accused of striking and threatening Josie Harris, his ex-girlfriend of 15 years and the mother of three of his children. Harris left Mayweather last May, but the charges stem from a September 9 incident. Allegedly, Mayweather lost his temper when Harris revealed she was having a relationship with another man. After Mayweather demanded that Harris and the children move out of their Las Vegas house, which he owns, he allegedly stole Harris' cell phone and threatened to beat two of their children if they dialed 911 while he scuffled with Harris.

Another pending case involving the fighter is a misdemeanor battery charge from his allegedly poking a security guard in the face during an argument about parking outside Mayweather's home. The altercation led to Mayweather spending a night in the county jail and a court injunction filed by The Southern Highlands Estates homeowner association for $10,000 in damages. The association complained that Mayweather failed to follow rules and threatened employees.

Mayweather made no comment in court. Outside, flanked by manager Leonard Ellerbe, adviser Sam Watson, and fiancée Shantel Jackson, he steered clear of his legal problems and said he would rather talk about "something positive," such as feeding the homeless.

His lawyers have denied any guilt on Mayweather's part, but, if Mayweather is convicted of all charges, including felony grand larceny, coercion and robbery, one misdemeanor domestic battery, and three misdemeanor harassment charges, he faces 34 years in prison.

One week prior, Floyd's uncle and trainer Roger Mayweather was sentenced to a year of probation, 24 weeks of domestic violence counseling, 50 hours of community service, and a $1,000 fine for the August 2, 2009, incident in which he choked and punched a female boxer he once trained. Mayweather avoided a trial and jail time for this Las Vegas domestic battery case by pleading no-contest to two misdemeanor battery charges.

Clark County District Court Judge Valerie Adair accepted Mayweather's pleas as an admission of guilt. Mayweather, known in his fighting days as "Black Mamba," was warned to stay out of trouble for a year or face a year in county jail.

The alleged victim, Melissa St. Vil, agreed to the plea deal but was not in court. Mayweather's attorney Jack Buchanan considered the deal fair.

—Don Stradley

TWO OF A KIND
Floyd and Roger Mayweather work the pads

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Bennie Briscoe: A Personal Remembrance

I can still see him in my mind's eye, his trademark shaven head shining in the lights as he jogged down the aisle to the ring, the crowd cheering him every step of the way. The anticipation was palatable: You knew if Bennie Briscoe was on the card you were going see a *real* fight. Somebody was going to get hurt.

The first fight I covered for THE RING was Briscoe's seventh-round TKO of Luis Vinales on October 11, 1972. Almost 40 years later, on January 10, 2011, I attended Bennie's funeral service at the Deliverance Evangelistic Church in North Philly. It was a bittersweet occasion that scrambled my emotions in unexpected ways.

As I paid my final respects, it was hard to reconcile the wax-like figure in the coffin with the flesh and blood man who had struck fear in the hearts of a generation of middleweights. His death didn't come as a surprise; I knew he'd been ill for a couple of years. But that didn't stop a little piece of me dying along with him.

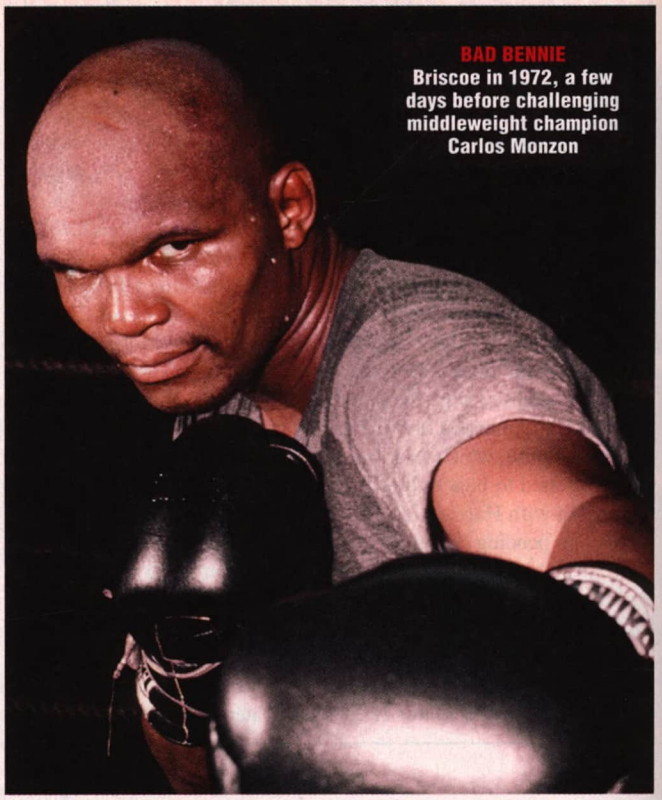
Bennie is my favorite fighter. Not the best I've ever seen, but my favorite nonetheless. For me, he was also the strongest symbol of the wonderful decade of the 1970s when Philadelphia boxing was basking in the rays of its last golden era.

That was before everybody had cable TV and before casino gambling in nearby Atlantic City stole the boxing spotlight away from Philadelphia. It was also a time when the sport depended on the live audience to generate virtually all of the revenue, and Briscoe became the city's top attraction among a field teeming with tough and talented prizefighters.

It didn't start out that way, but Bennie outlasted his contemporaries, and, along the way, became a beloved figure in a hard-to-please city, where just being good at your job was never enough to win the hearts of the people.

There was, however, something about Briscoe that struck a chord that resonated from the ghettos to the Main Line and all the blue-collar neighborhoods in between.

It started, of course, with his fierce, uncompromising fighting style. Briscoe chugged irrepressibly forward, walking through his opponents' offerings like a man brushing aside a swarm of gnats. And when he got within range, "Bad" Bennie unleashed vicious, arching blows, any one of which could end a fight.



BAD BENNIE
Briscoe in 1972, a few days before challenging middleweight champion Carlos Monzon

He was a crippling bodypuncher and ruthless in-fighter. If he got a man trapped in a corner and worked him over, the guy might never be the same fighter again. Briscoe had what the old-timers called "heavy hands," and even a friendly tap on the upper arm would still hurt the next day. I know from firsthand experience.

BRISCOE'S GREATEST HITS

Briscoe's career record was 66-24-5 (53) with 1 no-contest, but the numbers don't tell half the story. Here, in chronological order, are 10 highlights from a career filled with memorable fights.

KO 9 George Benton, December 5, 1966: Briscoe absorbed one combination after another before stopping the master craftsman who would eventually become his trainer.

D 10 Carlos Monzon, May 6, 1967: If Briscoe drew with the future middleweight champion in Argentina, who do you think really won?

KO 8 Vincente Rondon, January 26, 1969: This avenged a decision loss to the Puerto Rican who would go on to win the WBA light heavyweight title in 1971.

KO 2 Juarez De Lima, August 10, 1971: Briscoe destroyed another former conqueror on J Russell Peltz' first promotion at the brand new Spectrum that drew just under 10,000 fans.

KO 2 Rafael Gutierrez, November 15, 1971: Briscoe survived two first-round knockdowns to stop the Mexican contender in the second.

KO 8 Billy Douglas, June 25, 1973: The hard-hitting father of Buster Douglas had won a series of fights in Philly before Briscoe ended his streak.

KO 5 Tony Mundine, February 25, 1974: The white-hot Aussie contender needed one more big name on his resume before challenging Monzon. Briscoe spoiled everything in the most impressive road victory of his career, becoming the toast of Paris in the process.

W 10 Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, August 18, 1975: The future light heavyweight titlist was still called Eddie "The Flame" Gregory when Briscoe hammered out a close decision.

D 10 Eugene "Cyclone" Hart, November 18, 1975: The British *Boxing News* called it the second-best fight of the year. Number one? The "Thriller in Manila."

KO 1 Eugene "Cyclone" Hart, April 6, 1976: Briscoe erases all doubt as to who was the king of Philadelphia middleweights with a brutal first-round kayo. —N.C.

10 GREATEST PHILADELPHIA FIGHTERS

In honor of the wonderful Philadelphia middleweight Bennie Briscoe, who died in late December, we present the 10 greatest Philadelphia fighters ever. For the record, we define "Philadelphia fighter" as one who fought out of Philadelphia throughout his career, regardless of where he was born.

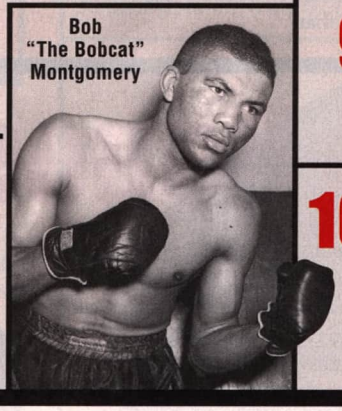
1 TOMMY LOUGHRAN 1919-1937
94-23-9 (17) with 45 no-decisions and 1 no-contest
Loughran couldn't punch worth a damn but boxed well enough to beat Harry Greb, Georges Carpentier, Jimmy Braddock, Mickey Walker, Jack Sharkey, Max Baer, and King Levinsky. Enough said.

2 JOE FRAZIER 1965-1981, 32-4-1 (27)
When your only career losses are to George Foreman and Muhammad Ali, you know you're a badass. How great was Smokin' Joe? They all went into the ring knowing the hook was coming. He beat them with it anyway.

3 HAROLD JOHNSON 1946-1971, 76-11 (32)
If not for Archie Moore, Johnson would have been the best light heavyweight in the world from about 1950 until 1963. Teddy Brenner was right when he said Johnson represented "perfection in the art of boxing."

4 BERNARD HOPKINS 1988-Present, 51-5-2 (32)
Most title defenses ever at 160, another world title at 175, and, at 46 years old, he's running guys half his age out of the ring. What more do you want?

5 BOB MONTGOMERY
1938-1950, 75-19-3 (37)
One of the best lightweights ever, Montgomery went 2-2 against Beau Jack and 1-1 against Ike Williams in a series of savage fights. "The Bobcat" was as tough as they came.


Bob "The Bobcat" Montgomery

6 JOEY GIARDELLO
1948-1967, 100-25-7 (32) with 1 no-decision
Giardello fought everyone there was to fight and still didn't get a shot at the world middleweight title until he was 33 years old. And when it finally came, he took advantage, beating the great Dick Tiger over 15 rounds.

7 PHILADELPHIA JACK O'BRIEN
1896-1912, 100-6-16 (51) with 57 no-decisions
O'Brien never weighed more than 165 pounds but beat Bob Fitzsimmons, Joe Walcott (Barbados), Joe Choynski, and Young Peter Jackson. He also fought Stanley Ketchel and Sam Langford.

8 JEFF CHANDLER 1976-1984, 33-2-2 (18)
"Joltin' Jeff" defended the WBA bantamweight title seven times in under three years, lost it to Oscar Muniz, regained it with a win over Eijiro Murata—in Tokyo!—then knocked out Muniz in a rematch just to show him what time it was. If you don't think a 118-pound man can be a stone killer, you never saw Chandler go to work.

9 MATTHEW SAAD MUHAMMAD 1974-1992, 39-16-3 (29)
Muhammad was arguably the most exciting fighter in the world and easily the most compelling light heavyweight in the late 1970s and early '80s. His thrilling, come-from-behind title fight victories over Marvin Johnson and Yaqui Lopez are legendary.

10 BENNIE BRISCOE 1962-1982, 66-24-5 (53)
"Bad Bennie" ranks up there with Charley Burley, Jimmy Bivins, and Holman Williams among the greatest fighters who never won a world a title. There was no one he wouldn't fight—two or three times if he had to—and no one relished the thought of tangling with him. He was one of a kind.

—William Dettloff

Briscoe's utter lack of pretension, juxtaposed against his fearsome ring persona, were a perfect match for a shot-and-beer city like Philly.

Bennie would never shake his opponent's hand before the fight and, win or lose, would never say a bad word about him when the fight was over. His battle plan was always the same: Get in shape and try to stop the other guy. He stood between rounds instead of sitting on his stool and was never in a bad fight. We loved him for all of that and more.

Briscoe was a genuine badass, but a badass with a generous heart for everybody except for the guy in the other corner. At the memorial service, his younger brother, Archie Glenn, said: "If Briscoe had a million dollars, he wouldn't have a dime. He would give it all away. He knew what it was like to be hungry."

Although he had his final fight in 1982, Briscoe was not a forgotten man when he passed on December 28, 2010. The Philadelphia fight fraternity turned out en masse to say goodbye to a fallen hero. Joe Frazier was there and so was Larry Hazzard and Bobby "Boogaloo" Watts. Willie "The Worm" Monroe was one of the pallbearers. A number of Briscoe's victims were on hand, including Eugene "Cyclone" Hart and Kitten Hayward. Former WBA light heavyweight titleholder Eddie Mustafa Muhammad flew in from Las Vegas to pay tribute to the man who had beaten him in 1975.

When Hall of Fame promoter J Russell Peltz spoke so movingly of the fighter who "made him," it was impossible to keep the tears from welling up. But in an attempt to honor Bennie's incredible toughness, I held them back and went the distance without needing one of the tissues the church ladies were handing out.

If you had to sum up Briscoe in a short, declarative sentence, I'd go with what veteran cutman Milt Bailey said when somebody asked him to describe the fighter whose corner he had worked in rings around the world.

"He's 100 percent man," said Bailey.

Amen to that.

After the casket was sealed and the large crowd shuffled into the lobby, I knew for sure that if a man such as Bennie Briscoe could die, my secret hope of immortality was as ephemeral as the chilly breeze that blew as his remains were loaded into a hearse.

—Nigel Collins

BOXING BOOKSHELF

Joseph Page comes out swinging in *Primo Carnera: The Life and Career of the Heavyweight Boxing Champion*, an earnest and valiant but unconvincing attempt to recast Italy's 6-foot-7 "Ambling Alp" as a worthy descendant of Sullivan, Jeffries, Johnson, and Dempsey.

"For entirely too long," writes Page in his opening sentence, "Primo Carnera has been on the butt end of boxing lore ... a person at whom ridicule, jest, and contempt were frequently directed" and about whom "blatant smears and piling on by the uninformed has been the norm."

In fact, he argues, "It is a mistake to write Primo Carnera off as a third-rater, a mob tool, and a foolish oaf who didn't belong in the ring. He may not have been a natural in the ring, but he worked as hard as any boxer could to learn his craft, to be in top condition, and he repeatedly showed that he was tougher than nails. Aided by God-given size and a self-taught work ethic, he became a respectable fighter—flawed, yes, but still a good fighter."

Page writes with passion, incredulity, and, if I may say so, a soupcon of naiveté, plus a whole lot of so's-your-old-man. Plenty of other fighters throughout ring history have had controversial fights, Page writes. He discounts the confessions of Leon See, Primo's first manager, who said that most of Carnera's early bouts in Europe were barneys, and those of some of the opponents on his first US tour who figured it was healthier to lay down for Carnera than stand up to the hoods in his corner. While conceding: "There is evidence to suggest that some of Carnera's opponents may have been less than eager to remain in the ring for whatever reason," Page goes so far as to insist that fixing his fights was unnecessary because "Carnera could fight. The man simply did not need that much help in the ring."

He approvingly quotes from Paul Gallico's famous piece, "Pity the Poor Giant," about how Carnera's underworld handlers picked him clean financially, but the Gallico who wrote in the same piece that "... As a giant, a terror and a horror, [Carnera] stands exposed as a poor, unwilling fraud who was no man-killer at all, but a rather helpless, sad creature who, when slugged by a 185-pound mortal, either toppled stricken to the floor or staggered about or bled or had to be saved from annihilation" is apparently one of what Page calls the "uninformed" responsible for the historical denigration of a creditable champion.

Though Page's premise—that Carnera was what too many observers who were present at the creation (like Gallico) said he clearly wasn't—is shaky, his dogged advocacy on behalf of "Da Preem" is admirable and almost infectious. The book is detailed, if somewhat plodding and formulaic, and it's impossible to read it and not realize that Carnera was a man who made up for what he lacked in pugilistic skill with simple decency and towering valor.

—Pete Ehrmann

Outside The Ropes

The ubiquitous **Manny Pacquiao** receives more media attention for his outside the ring activities than any other boxer. Since returning to the Philippines following his win over **Antonio Margarito**, Pacquiao's election victory was selected as one of CNN's "20 Stories That Changed Our World In 2010." Moreover, Philippines President **Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III** has committed 200-million pesos ($4.55-million) toward the construction of a hospital in Pacquiao's Sarangani district. This is in addition to the 140-million pesos ($1.59-million) "pork barrel" fund originally allocated for Sarangani. In late December, Pacquiao denied media reports that claimed that his bodyguard pointed a gun at IBC 12 cameraman, **Dave Llavanes**, at the House of Representatives. Pacquiao said that the bodyguard had a slight misunderstanding with Llavanes but did not draw his gun. "Pac-Man" also said he reprimanded the bodyguard and told him to be more respectful to the media. Meanwhile, back in the USA, **RBM Group International** has withdrawn its $10-million lawsuit against Pacquiao. The recording company had sued Pacquiao for breach of contract ... The Alabama Athletic Commission has issued the first professional boxing license to Olympic medalist **Deontay Wilder** ... According to philly.com, **Bernard Hopkins** and two pit bulls visited the Camden (New Jersey) Boxing Academy to encourage spaying and neutering the breed, particularly in urban areas where some wind up in dog-fighting rings. "I'm a dog lover," said Hopkins, who owns a pit bull. "At the end of the day, if you don't spay and neuter dogs like this, it can cause chaos" ... After a two-month stay, former world middleweight champion **Kelly Pavlik** left the Betty Ford Center, where he was treated for alcohol abuse. "He wants to mend his ways and accomplish so many other things in boxing," Pavlik's co-manager, **Cameron Dunkin**, told ESPN.com. "He's very motivated to return to boxing" ... Australian light heavyweight contender **Danny Green**, 37, is recovering from emergency surgery to remove a cricket ball-sized abscess and his appendix. **David Mountain**, president of the Australian Medical Association, said if Green had been

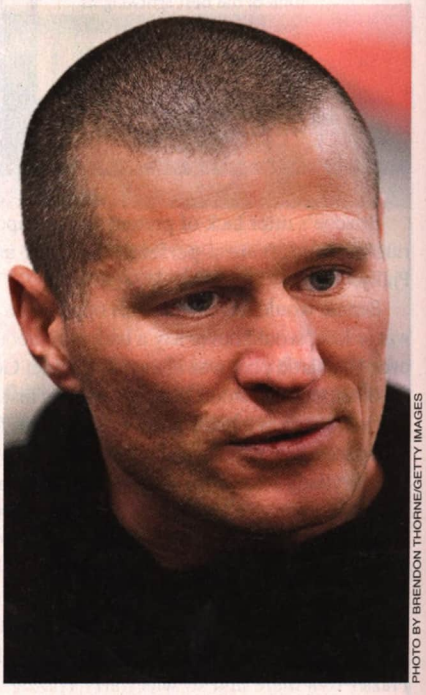
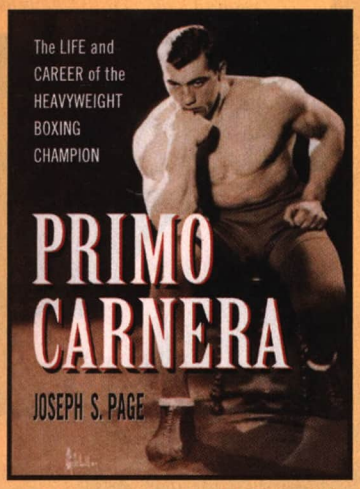


PHOTO BY BRENDON THORNE/GETTY IMAGES

CLOSE CALL
Emergency surgery saved Green's life

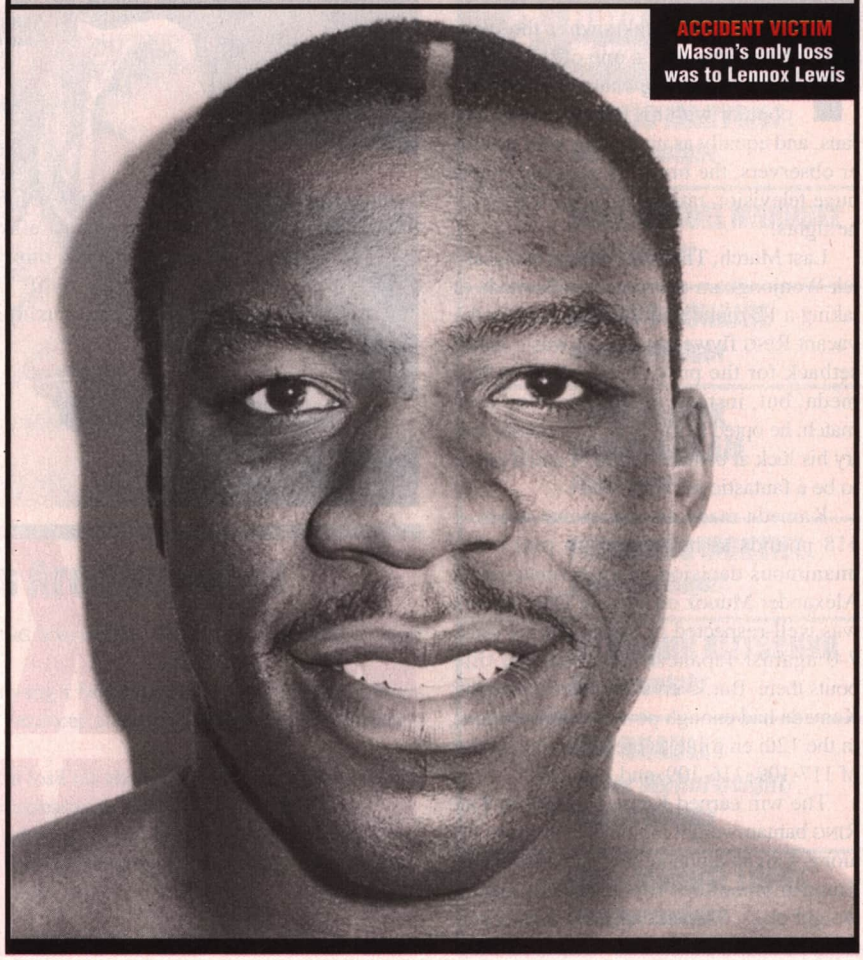


PRIMO CARNERA: THE LIFE AND CAREER OF THE HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING CHAMPION
By Joseph Page
McFarland, soft cover
257 pages, $35.00

punched in the abdomen after the abscess evolved, the consequences might have been fatal … Wikileaks has indirectly spread to boxing. According to examiner.com writer **Marv Dumon**, confidential US intelligence documents claim that former welterweight champion **Ricardo Mayorga** was allegedly blackmailed by Nicaraguan President **Daniel Ortega** when the boxer was charged with rape in 2004. In part, the leaked document read: "Sensing an opportunity to blackmail Mayorga, Ortega and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) agreed to protect the boxer in the courts if he would give the party a large portion of his international boxing winnings and 'advertise' for Ortega in public. Mayorga agreed, and an FSLN judge found him not guilty." When asked about the situation, Mayorga said it was "Absolutely not true" … **Hydra Lacy Jr.**, the brother of former IBF super middleweight titleholder **Jeff Lacy**, was killed in a shootout with the St. Petersburg, Florida, police in which two officers were killed and a US Marshall was wounded. Hydra was described as a "violent fugitive sex offender."

OBITUARIES

Former British heavyweight champion **Gary Mason**, 48, was killed in a bicycle accident on January 6. Mason was cycling near his home in the Wallington area of South London when he collided with a van and died at the scene. The driver of the other vehicle was arrested on suspicion of causing death by careless driving and released on bail pending further inquiries. The hard-hitting Mason turned pro in 1984 and won the British title by knocking out **Hughroy Currie** in January '89. He held the title until March '91, when **Lennox Lewis** stopped him on cuts in the seventh round. It was Mason's only pro defeat. The Jamaica-born boxer made a brief comeback in '94, winning two bouts in the US before hanging up his gloves for good. Other victims of Mason's 37-1 (34) record included **Tyrell Biggs**, **James "Quick" Tillis**, **Alfonzo Ratliff**, and **James Pritchard**. After boxing, Mason was involved in rugby league, arm-wrestling, and therapeutic drumming. "I'm very sad," British promoter **Frank Maloney** told the *Leamington Spa Courier*. "It's a great loss, not just for boxing but to life in general. He was always a happy guy with a smile on his face. Even if things were going wrong for him, he cheered other people up. He was one of the nice guys of boxing" … Trainer **Ralph Farrait**, known as "Pastor Ralph," was found dead on December 3. Farrait trained amateur and pro boxers at the Cornerstone Boxing Club in the Bronx with longtime partner **Eddie "Mousie" Acevedo**. Farrait helped guide **Giovanni Lorenzo** to middleweight title shots against IBF titleholder **Sebastian Sylvester** in 2009 and WBA titleholder **Felix Sturm** in 2010. Lorenzo lost 12-round decisions in both bouts … Nepalese amateur **Raju Budhamagar**, 21, died of a brain injury in a Katmandu hospital on January 5 after suffering a knockout the day before during an Inter-Municipality Boxing Tournament. Budhamagar's family has received 200,000 Nepal Rupees (approximately $2,750) from various organizations.



ACCIDENT VICTIM
Mason's only loss was to Lennox Lewis

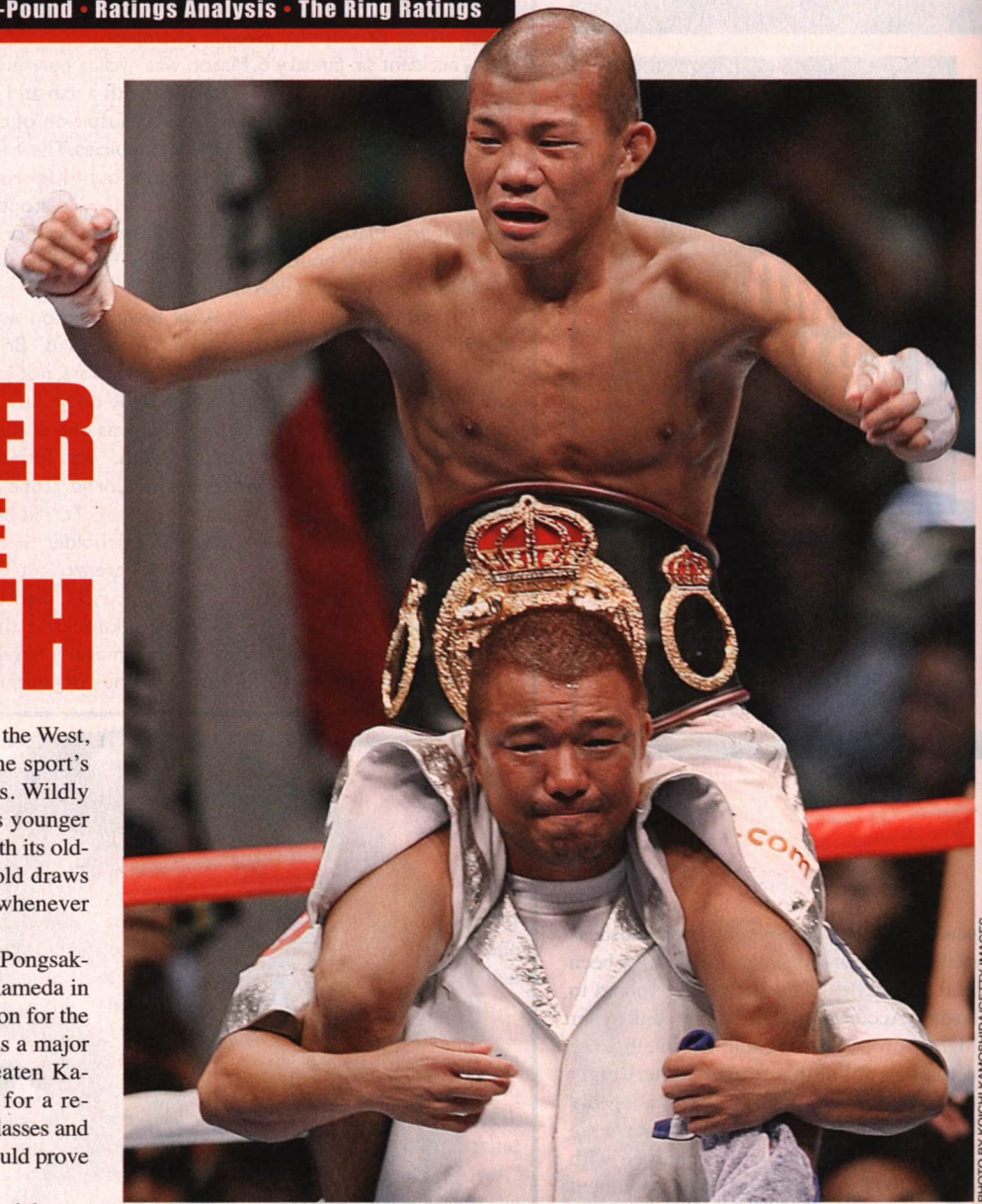


PHOTO BY KOICHI KAMOSHIDA/GETTY IMAGES

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

KOKI KAMEDA

Though largely unknown in the West, Koki Kameda is one of the sport's most intriguing characters. Wildly popular with his country's younger fans, and equally as unpopular with its older observers, the brash 24-year-old draws huge television ratings in Japan whenever he fights.

Last March, Thailand veteran Pongsaklek Wonjongkam overpowered Kameda in taking a 12-round majority decision for the vacant RING flyweight title. It was a major setback for the previously unbeaten Kameda, but, instead of lobbying for a rematch, he opted to move up two classes and try his luck at bantamweight. It could prove to be a fantastic move.

Kameda made an impressive debut at 118 pounds as he worked to pull out a unanimous decision against Venezuela's Alexander Munoz on Boxing Day. Munoz was well-respected in Japan, having gone 7-0 against Japanese opponents in title bouts there. But, even at the heavier weight, Kameda had enough power to drop Munoz in the 12th en route to prevailing by scores of 117-109, 116-109, and 115-111.

The win earned Kameda a spot in THE RING bantamweight rankings at number 10, along with an alphabet belt and some newfound momentum. In an already loaded weight class, Kameda appears to be a perfect addition.

RATINGS ANALYSIS

For Period Ended January 23, 2011

Heavyweights: No changes.

Cruiserweights: No changes.

Light Heavyweights: No changes.

Super Middleweights: No changes.

Middleweights: No changes.

Junior Middleweights: No changes.

Welterweights: No changes.

Junior Welterweights: No changes.

Lightweights: No changes.

Junior Lightweights: No changes.

Featherweights: No changes.

Junior Featherweights: No changes.

Bantamweights: Sasha Bakhtin (eighth last issue) has not fought in almost a year and exits. His departure allows Eric Morel (ninth last issue) and Vic Darchinyan (10th last issue) to climb one rung each and makes room for Koki Kameda, who had previously been fighting at flyweight, to debut at 10, thanks to his victory over Alexander Munoz. Kameda's inclusion makes the bantamweight class arguably the best division, from top to bottom, in boxing.

Junior Bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: Koki Kameda (first last issue) and his brother, Daiki (third last issue), both leave. Koki departs to campaign at 118, while Daiki exits to fight at junior bantamweight. Their departure bumps up Daisuke Naito (second last issue) to the number-one contender and everybody rated from four to 10 up two places each and allows Edgar Sosa to take over at nine and Tomonobu Shimizu to enter at 10.

Junior Flyweights: No changes.

Strawweights: No changes.

Pound-for-Pound: No changes.

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at ringtv.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

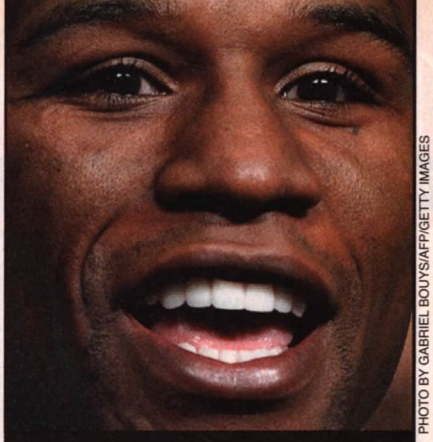


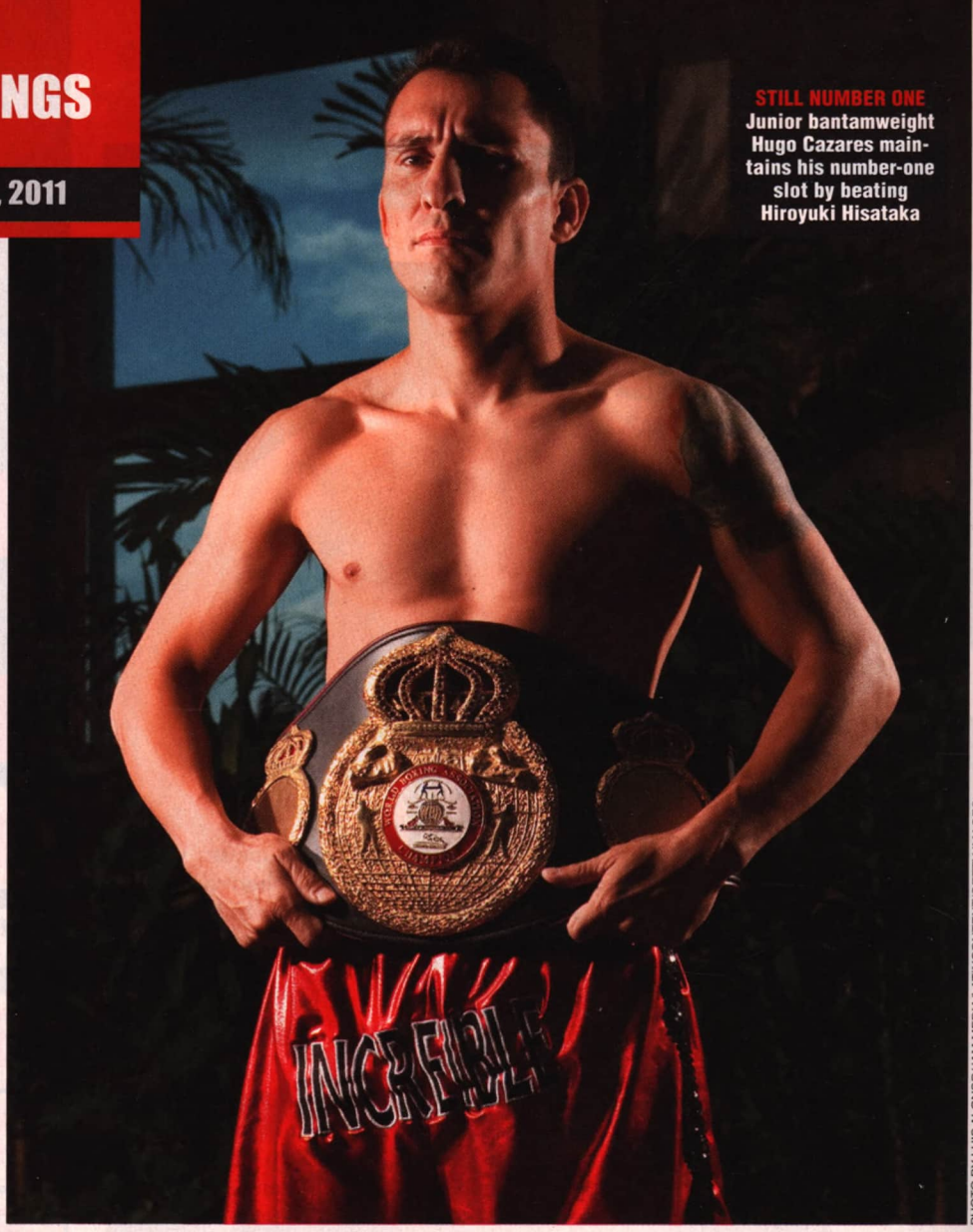
PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

POUND FOR POUND

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO** *Welterweight*
2. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** *Welterweight*
3. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** *Middleweight*
4. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** *Lightweight*
5. **NONITO DONAIRE** *Bantamweight*
6. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM** *Flyweight*
7. **FERNANDO MONTIEL** *Bantamweight*
8. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** *Heavyweight*
9. **TIM BRADLEY** *Junior Welterweight/ Welterweight*
10. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ** *Featherweight*

The RING RATINGS

For Period Ended January 23, 2011



STILL NUMBER ONE
Junior bantamweight Hugo Cazares maintains his number-one slot by beating Hiroyuki Hisataka

PHOTO BY LUIS ALONSO/JAM MEDIA/LATINCONTENT/GETTY IMAGES

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to ringtv.com

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 55-3 (49)

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 41-2 (38)
2. **DAVID HAYE**
England 25-1 (23)
3. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia 21-0 (15)
4. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 43-1 (28)
5. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV**
Uzbekistan 26-1-1 (17)
6. **EDDIE CHAMBERS**
Philadelphia, PA 35-2 (18)
7. **DENIS BOYTSOV**
Russia 27-0 (22)
8. **NICOLAY VALUEV**
Russia 50-2 (34)
9. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO**
Ukraine 30-1 (20)
10. **CHRIS ARREOLA**
Riverside, CA 29-2 (25)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 23-2 (12)
2. **MARCO HUCK**
Yugoslavia 31-1 (23)
3. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 44-2-1 (32)
4. **DENIS LEBEDEV**
Russia 21-1 (16)
5. **TROY ROSS**
Canada 24-2 (16)
6. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 31-3 (27)
7. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
Italy 27-3-1 (11)
8. **OLA AFOLABI**
England 15-2-3 (6)
9. **PAWEL KOLODZIEJ**
Poland 27-0 (16)
10. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 37-3-2 (29)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: JEAN PASCAL
Haiti 26-1-1 (16)

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 51-5-2 (32)
2. **TAVORIS CLOUD**
Tallahassee, FL 22-0 (18)
3. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 29-1 (17)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica 51-14-2 (35)
5. **NATHAN CLEVERLY**
Wales 21-0 (10)
6. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Romania 27-2 (15)
7. **KARO MURAT**
Iraq 22-1 (13)
8. **BEIBUT SHUMENOV**
Kazakhstan 11-1 (7)
9. **CHRIS HENRY**
Houston, TX 25-2 (20)
10. **GABRIEL CAMPILLO**
Spain 20-3 (7)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ANDRE WARD**
Oakland, CA 23-0 (13)
2. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Romania 27-0 (22)
3. **CARL FROCH**
England 27-1 (21)
4. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 43-2 (32)
5. **ANDRE DIRRELL**
Flint, MI 19-1 (13)
6. **SAKIO BIKA**
Cameroon 28-5-2 (19)
7. **ROBERT STIEGLITZ**
Germany 39-2 (23)
8. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 29-3 (22)
9. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica 51-14-2 (35)
10. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Armenia 31-2 (25)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: SERGIO MARTINEZ
Argentina 46-2-2 (25)

1. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 34-2-1 (14)
2. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 36-2 (32)
3. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 34-3-1 (16)
4. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 39-2 (27)
5. **DANIEL GEALE**
Australia 24-1 (15)
6. **MATTHEW MACKLIN**
England 28-2 (19)
7. **SEBASTIAN ZBIK**
Germany 30-0 (10)
8. **DMITRY PIROG**
Russia 17-0 (14)
9. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 39-12 (23)
10. **HASSAN N'DAM N'JIKAM**
France 25-0 (17)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **KERMIT CINTRON**
   Reading, PA 32-3-1 (28)
2. **ALFREDO ANGULO**
   Mexico 19-1 (16)
3. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 35-2 (28)
4. **RYAN RHODES**
   England 45-4 (31)
5. **SECHEW POWELL**
   Brooklyn, NY 26-2 (15)
6. **YURI FOREMAN**
   Belarus 28-1 (8)
7. **VANES MARTIROSYAN**
   Armenia 28-0 (17)
8. **SERGIY DZINZIRUK**
   Ukraine 37-0 (23)
9. **CORNELIUS BUNDRAGE**
   Detroit, MI 30-4 (18)
10. **SAUL ALVAREZ**
    Mexico 35-0-1 (26)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Philippines 52-3-2 (38)
2. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI 41-0 (25)
3. **ANDRE BERTO**
   Winter Haven, FL 27-0 (21)
4. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 35-2 (28)
5. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA 46-6-1 (39)
6. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
   Ghana 35-4 (20)
7. **JAN ZAVECK**
   Slovenia 30-1 (17)
8. **VYACHESLAV SENCHENKO**
   Ukraine 31-0 (20)
9. **RAFAL JACKIEWICZ**
   Poland 36-9-1 (18)
10. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
    Palm Springs, CA 26-0 (11)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
   Palm Springs, CA 26-0 (11)
2. **AMIR KHAN**
   England 24-1 (17)
3. **DEVON ALEXANDER**
   St. Louis, MO 21-0 (13)
4. **MARCOS MAIDANA**
   Argentina 29-2 (27)
5. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
   Ukraine 31-4-1 (13)
6. **JUAN URANGO**
   Colombia 22-3-1 (17)
7. **KAIZER MABUZA**
   South Africa 23-6-3 (14)
8. **LAMONT PETERSON**
   Washington, D.C. 28-1-1 (14)
9. **VICTOR ORTIZ**
   Garden City, KN 28-2-2 (22)
10. **PAUL MCCLOSKEY**
    England 22-0 (12)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
Mexico 52-5-1 (38)

1. **MIGUEL ACOSTA**
   Venezuela 27-8-2 (21)
2. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
   Mexico 54-7-2 (32)
3. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
   Australia 27-3 (22)
4. **ALI FUNEKA**
   South Africa 30-3-3 (25)
5. **BRANDON RIOS**
   Lubbock, TX 26-0-1 (19)
6. **JOHN MURRAY**
   England 30-0 (18)
7. **PAULUS MOSES**
   Namibia 26-1 (18)
8. **URBANO ANTILLON**
   Mexico 28-2 (20)
9. **MIGUEL VAZQUEZ**
   Mexico 27-3 (12)
10. **ROBERT GUERRERO**
    Gilroy, CA 28-1-1 (18)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MZONKE FANA**
   South Africa 30-4 (12)
2. **RICKY BURNS**
   Scotland 30-2 (7)
3. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
   Puerto Rico 24-1-1 (15)
4. **TAKASHI UCHIYAMA**
   Japan 16-0 (13)
5. **JORGE SOLIS**
   Mexico 40-2-2 (29)
6. **JUAN CARLOS SALGADO**
   Mexico 22-1-1 (16)
7. **JORGE LINARES**
   Venezuela 30-1 (19)
8. **TAKAHIRO AO**
   Japan 20-2-1 (9)
9. **ARGENIS MENDEZ**
   Dominican Republic 17-1 (9)
10. **JASON LITZAU**
    St. Paul, MN 28-2 (21)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ**
   Puerto Rico 30-0 (27)
2. **YURIORKIS GAMBOA**
   Cuba 19-0 (15)
3. **CHRIS JOHN**
   Indonesia 44-0-2 (22)
4. **ORLANDO SALIDO**
   Mexico 34-11-2 (22)
5. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON**
   Mexico 41-2 (34)
6. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ**
   Mexico 39-12-2 (23)
7. **ELIO ROJAS**
   Dominican Republic 22-1 (13)
8. **BERNABE CONCEPCION**
   Philippines 28-4-1 (15)
9. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
   Mexico 39-6 (35)
10. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
    Japan 29-3 (12)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
   Japan 37-4-3 (23)
2. **ROY LI LEE**
   Japan 17-1-1 (8)
3. **POONSAWAT KRATINGDAENGGYM**
   Thailand 41-2 (29)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR**
   Canada 33-1 (12)
5. **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
   Cuba 7-0 (5)
6. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
   Panama 37-3-2 (23)
7. **TAKALANI NDLOVU**
   South Africa 31-6 (18)
8. **JEFF MATHEBULA**
   South Africa 24-3-2 (14)
9. **WILFREDO VAZQUEZ JR.**
   Puerto Rico 20-0-1 (17)
10. **RENDALL MUNROE**
    England 21-2 (9)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 44-2-2 (34)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO**
   Panama 30-1-1 (10)
3. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
   Ghana 28-2 (22)
4. **ABNER MARES**
   Mexico 21-0-1 (13)
5. **NONITO DONAIRE**
   Philippines 25-1 (17)
6. **YONNHY PEREZ**
   Colombia 20-1-1 (14)
7. **NEHOMAR CERMENO**
   Venezuela 19-2 (11)
8. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI 43-2 (21)
9. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Armenia 35-3-1 (27)
10. **KOKI KAMEDA**
    Japan 24-1 (15)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HUGO CAZARES**
   Mexico 34-6-2 (24)
2. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
   Japan 14-2-1 (9)
3. **TOMAS ROJAS**
   Mexico 34-12-1 (23)
4. **KOHEI KONO**
   Japan 25-5 (9)
5. **DRIAN FRANCISCO**
   Philippines 20-0-1 (16)
6. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 32-0-2 (19)
7. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
   Mexico 41-6-2 (18)
8. **CESAR SEDA**
   Puerto Rico 20-0 (15)
9. **YOTA SATO**
   Japan 20-2-1 (11)
10. **JUAN ALBERTO ROSAS**
    Mexico 32-6 (26)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM
Thailand 78-3-1 (42)

1. **DAISUKE NAITO**
   Japan 36-3-3 (23)
2. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
   Panama 22-1 (17)
3. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
   Japan 36-6-2 (17)
4. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
   Thailand 50-3-1 (20)
5. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
   South Africa 26-2 (17)
6. **JULIO CESAR MIRANDA**
   Mexico 34-5-1 (27)
7. **ROCKY FUENTES**
   Philippines 28-6-2 (18)
8. **MILAN MELINDO**
   Philippines 23-0 (7)
9. **EDGAR SOSA**
   Mexico 41-6 (24)
10. **TOMONOBU SHIMIZU**
    Japan 17-3-1 (8)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: GIOVANI SEGURA
Mexico 26-1-1 (22)

1. **IVAN CALDERON**
   Puerto Rico 34-1-1 (6)
2. **GILBERTO KEB BAAS**
   Mexico 34-20-4 (21)
3. **OMAR NINO**
   Mexico 30-4-2 (12)
4. **RODEL MAYOL**
   Philippines 27-5-2 (21)
5. **LUIS ALBERTO LAZARTE**
   Argentina 48-9-2 (18)
6. **CARLOS TAMARA**
   Colombia 21-6 (15)
7. **BRIAN VILORIA**
   Waipahu, HI 28-3 (16)
8. **ULISES SOLIS**
   Mexico 32-2-3 (21)
9. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
   Argentina 26-1 (15)
10. **RAMON GARCIA HIRALES**
    Mexico 15-1-1 (8)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
   South Africa 21-0 (15)
2. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
   Thailand 35-0-1 (13)
3. **RAUL GARCIA**
   Mexico 29-1-1 (17)
4. **DONNIE NIETES**
   Philippines 27-1-3 (15)
5. **FLORANTE CONDES**
   Philippines 25-5-1 (21)
6. **JUAN PALACIOS**
   Nicaragua 27-3 (21)
7. **DENVER CUELLO**
   Philippines 25-4-6 (15)
8. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
   Japan 24-4 (10)
9. **MICHAEL LANDERO**
   Philippines 14-4-4 (4)
10. **KWANTHAI SITHMORSENG**
    Thailand 31-0-1 (17)

by Jeff Ryan

Vive La Difference

Among the most annoying life forms that populate the sports media are those writers and broadcasters who try to be different just for the sake of being different. You know the type. It's the columnist who "believes" steroids are good for baseball, the talk show host who argues that Johnny Unitas doesn't belong in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, or the sports anchor who picks the Pittsburgh Pirates to win the World Series next October and the Washington Generals to blow out the Harlem Globetrotters next weekend.

Fortunately, the urge to separate myself from the pack by taking a nutty stand has never appealed to me. (Oh, sure, more than a few nutty opinions have appeared in this column through the years, but none of them were ever a carefully crafted strategy to get attention.) If mine is ever the lone voice in the wilderness, it's because, well, that's just the way things happen to be.

This month in particular, I find myself disagreeing with the conventional wisdom on a number of topics. For instance, in my opinion …

1) Maybe Manny Pacquiao vs. Shane Mosley isn't such a bad idea: Hear me out. For starters, my initial reaction to the news that Bob Arum was digging "Sugar Shane" out of the recycling bin and matching him with the world's best warrior was to utter a string of words they don't teach in a one-room Amish schoolhouse. If Floyd Mayweather isn't next on Pacquiao's calendar, then surely there had to be someone more appealing to serve as Plan B (Juan Manuel Marquez, Andre Berto, Amir Khan, Timothy Bradley). After all, "Pac Man" has only X number of battles left in his creaking bones.

But that's just the point. At a battle-scarred 32 years of age and following 16 years in the ring, 57 fights, and a jump of about 40 pounds in weight throughout his career, Pacquiao is due to turn old overnight, or at the very least, have an off-night, particularly if the absence of a Mayweather fight robs him of some motivation and his political career in the Philippines becomes more of a distraction. And if that night arrives this May, Mosley (even a 39-year-old version in decline) has the game, experience, strength, and chin to make things interesting.

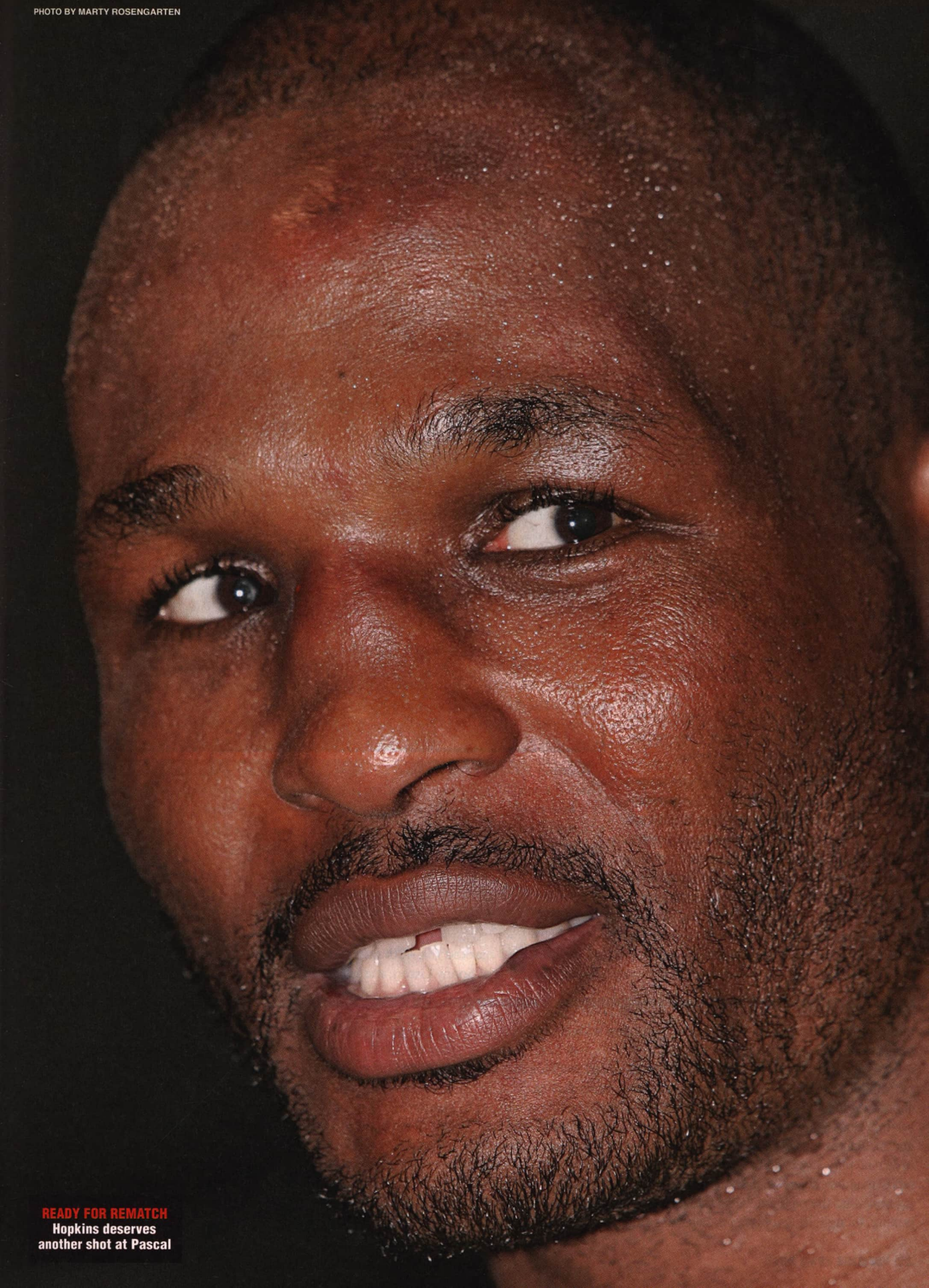
Would I put money on Mosley at the sports book? No. But I wouldn't bet on Pac-Man to keep dominating bigger men for much longer either.

2) Bernard Hopkins shouldn't be happy with his effort against Jean Pascal: And so many writers shouldn't be quick to follow their revelation that they had Hopkins ahead after 12 rounds with the lame disclaimer, "But I have no problem with it being scored a draw." Well,

WILD CARD WORKOUT
Ryan is okay with Pacquiao-Mosley

PHOTO BY LANDRY MAJOR/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN



READY FOR REMATCH
Hopkins deserves another shot at Pascal

PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS

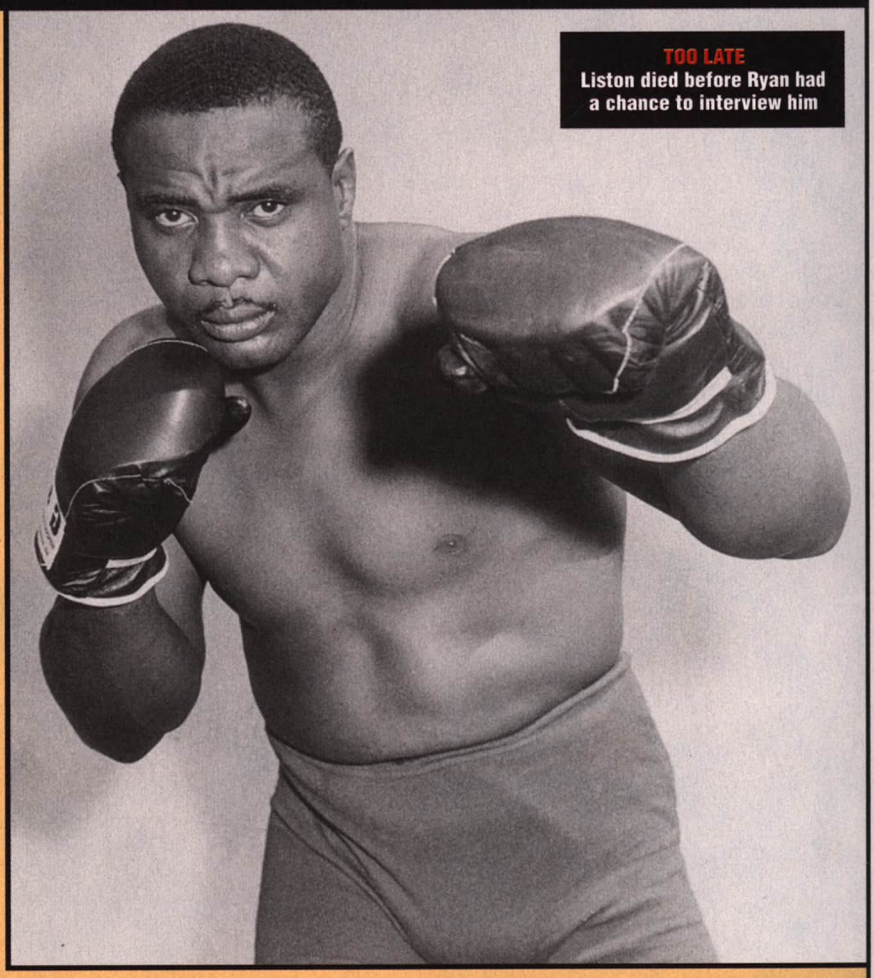
The last word on everything from mixed martial arts to mixed-up marital arts:

• Criticizing MMA is a lot of fun because it doesn't take much for me to get steam coming out of the cauliflower ears of that sport's diehards. ("Oh, yeah, Ryan, I'd like to see you in the cage." Oh, yeah, MMA nut, and I'd like to see you trying to construct two paragraphs that make sense. Faced with that daunting challenge, you'd probably be tapping out even faster than me.) Previously, I've incurred their wrath by pointing out how MMA warriors can't seem to take a punch and questioning why no one is good enough to have an unbeaten record for very long.

This month, maybe somebody can answer me this: Why do the referees allow combatants to remain locked in a clinch on the canvas for what seems like an eternity without either man gaining the upper hand? *That's* excitement? It's like watching a horizontal John Ruiz fight. There sure seems to be a lot less "ground and pound" and a lot more "ground and roll around" than advertised.

• Two years ago, David Haye was making lots of noise about challenging Vitali Klitschko. When that went nowhere, he started calling out Wladimir. After that fight was made, the Briton pulled out, citing a hand injury. Well, now, *Wladimir* is the one who has said no to a proposed showdown with Haye this July because, let me get this straight, he's afraid that Haye might cancel again? Geez, this stuff makes the Mayweather-Pacquiao negotiations seem normal.

• If it's true that Wladimir will now square off with Tomasz Adamek in a delicious matchup in September, then everything in this confusing Klitschko-Haye mess will have worked out for the best. Besides, Haye can still face Vitali or at least spend another year talking about doing so. Or maybe Haye can turn his attention to ... Wladimir? Wait a second! No sooner did Wlad dismantle negotiations for a Haye fight than he said he might be willing to reconsider. Oh, my aching head!



TOO LATE
Liston died before Ryan had a chance to interview him

• Antonio Tarver has also called out Haye. That's the same Tarver who has fought once as a heavyweight and hasn't impressed anyone since he beat Clinton Woods *three years ago*. Tarver-Haye, yeah, that's about as appealing as a Betty White pole dance.

• On the list of bigmouths who can't back up their talk, Allan Green has overtaken Paulie Malignaggi for the top spot.

• December 30 marked the 40th anniversary of the death of Sonny Liston, and it reminded me again that I came along as a boxing writer way too late. Two of the top three or four fighters I wish I could have interviewed, Liston and Rocky Marciano, were dead before I'd reached high school.

• It's a good bet that the incredible recent developments in the love life (and near death) of Christy Martin will end up on the big screen one day. Talk about a film that could make *The Fighter* look like *The Sound Of Music*.

maybe you spaghetti spines don't have a problem with it, but I sure do because *Hopkins won the fight*!

Ever since the location of the bout was announced as Pascal's home turf of Quebec City, this matchup left me with a queasy feeling. Was the shootout close? Yes. (I scored it 114-112 for "B-Hop.") But why, in boxing, does that always make an injustice more palatable? The fans and media never pooh-pooh a bad call in baseball just because the controversial play at second base was close. If a football referee rules incorrectly that a receiver was in-bounds, the screw job isn't forgiven on the grounds that the pass catcher's toe was only an inch over the line. In boxing, though, if it's only a mild shafting, then, hey, it's no big deal.

Except that we're talking about Bernard Hopkins here. When you're four weeks shy of your 46th birthday, turn in one of your best and most energized efforts in years, get off the canvas twice (although the knockdown in round one shouldn't have been ruled as one), have a once-beaten, hard-hitting 28-year-old backing away from you in the second half of the bout, and do enough to have your hand raised, it *is* a big deal. Throughout the 23 years of his pro career, "The Executioner" hasn't been a moral victory kind of guy for even five minutes.

"This one hurts the sport," Hopkins said of the decision. "One reason fighters from the States don't like fighting outside the country is stuff like this."

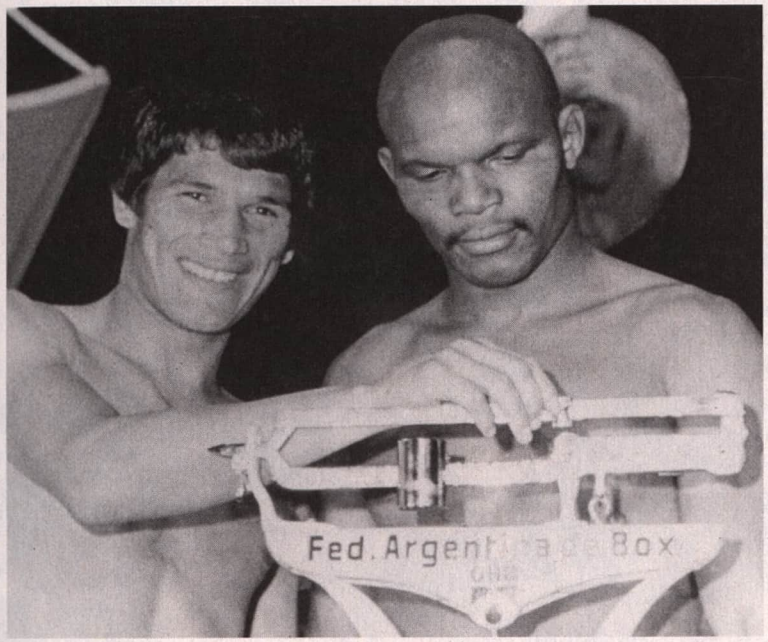
The good news for Hopkins and those who want to see justice served is that the WBC has ordered a mandatory rematch. Can a Hopkins who is even a few more months older by fight night replicate his performance from December? Who here is brave enough to say no with any certainty?

3) Bennie Briscoe shouldn't be elected to the IBHOF: The death of "Bad Bennie" at the age of 67 went underreported because it occurred during the week between Christmas Day and New Year's Day. In a sad way, that was only fitting, for Briscoe the fighter didn't get as much notice as he should have either, His prime came too soon for the era of great television warriors, the 1980s. Had the Philadelphia middleweight been exploding his punches on ABC, CBS, and NBC in those days, he might have become as much a Saturday-afternoon TV fixture as college football or *American Bandstand*.

Briscoe, one of the hardest punchers of all-time in any weight class, never won a world title. But he fought spirited wars in losses to Rodrigo Valdez, Carlos Monzon, Emile Griffith, and a then-unproven Marvin Hagler. Briscoe beat Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, Tony Mundine, and Cyclone Hart, and also fought draws with Griffith and the Argentine Monzon (at Monzon's home arena of Luna Park in Buenos Aries, no less. See, B-Hop, you're not the first Philadelphian to get shafted on the road.) It was Briscoe who epitomized that revered species known as "the Philly fighter." Yes, he belongs in Canastota, but it would be a shame if he's voted in now, when he can't enjoy the honor.

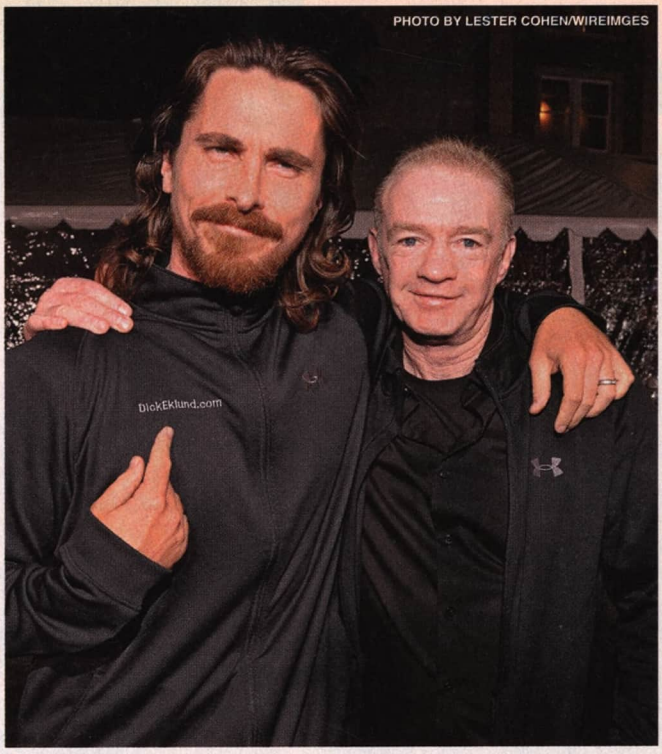
Former Boston Celtics star Jo Jo White once told me that he wouldn't even want to get enshrined in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame now because he's waited so long that all the special feelings he once would have had for the honor have evaporated. It just wouldn't mean as much anymore. Similarly, it would be terrible if Briscoe was voted into Canastota now out of guilt or as a gesture of sympathy. Briscoe, who feared no one in the ring and once worked for the sanitation department exterminating rats with a baseball bat, was never someone who asked for favors.

By the way, it's symbolic that Philly's Spectrum, home to many a Briscoe alley fight was being torn down at the same time Briscoe was leaving us. If Bad Bennie was still around and at his peak, they probably could have asked him to level the place with his fists.



TWO LEGENDS
Monzon and Briscoe weigh-in for a 1972 middleweight title fight

PHOTO BY LESTER COHEN/WIREIMGES



REEL & REAL
Actor Christian Bale (left) plays Dicky Eklund (left) in *The Fighter*

4) The Fighter doesn't live up to the hype: For some reason, this flick has enthralled the usually hard-to-please film critics of America. Maybe because it's based on a true story and everyone loves watching an underdog overcome great odds. Or perhaps it has something to do with the cast: Mark Wahlberg, Amy Adams, Christian Bale, and Melissa Leo, a lineup of heavyweights that rivals Ali, Frazier, Foreman, and Norton.

While *The Fighter* gets a thumbs-up from me overall and is a good movie, there were aspects of it that drove me crazy. First of all, I'm hoping that the flick utilized some poetic license and that Micky Ward's life wasn't the complete white trash fest depicted on screen. Also, the fight action sequences, as in nearly every boxing movie, feature an unrealistic amount of nonstop punching. Worst sin of all, though, is that there are no scenes or references to Ward's trilogy with Arturo Gatti, except for a line of type on the screen just before the end credits roll. *Ward-Gatti*, for heaven's sake! Not just a cute little rivalry, but one of the most revered trilogies in boxing history. That's like filming the FDR story and not including World War II.

The Gatti angle was supposedly skipped because *The Fighter* is just a snapshot of a brief time in Ward's life, particularly the stretch he spent dealing with half-brother/trainer Dick Eklund's substance abuse. To those who know the fight game, however, the "snapshot" comes across more as an attempt to underplay the limitations of Ward's skills. A big deal is made over his loss to a physically larger Mike Mungin in 1988, but most of Ward's 12 other defeats are omitted from the script, including four in a row in '90-'91. His 2000 knockout of Shea Neary for an alphabet belt is played up as some kind of climactic career achievement, even though it came two years before the first Gatti bout and registered on nobody's radar.

View *The Fighter* as entertainment, and you'll have a fun evening. Expect it to serve as a historical record, however, and you may want to put your fist through the screen. ■

DIGGING DEEP

by Ivan Goldman

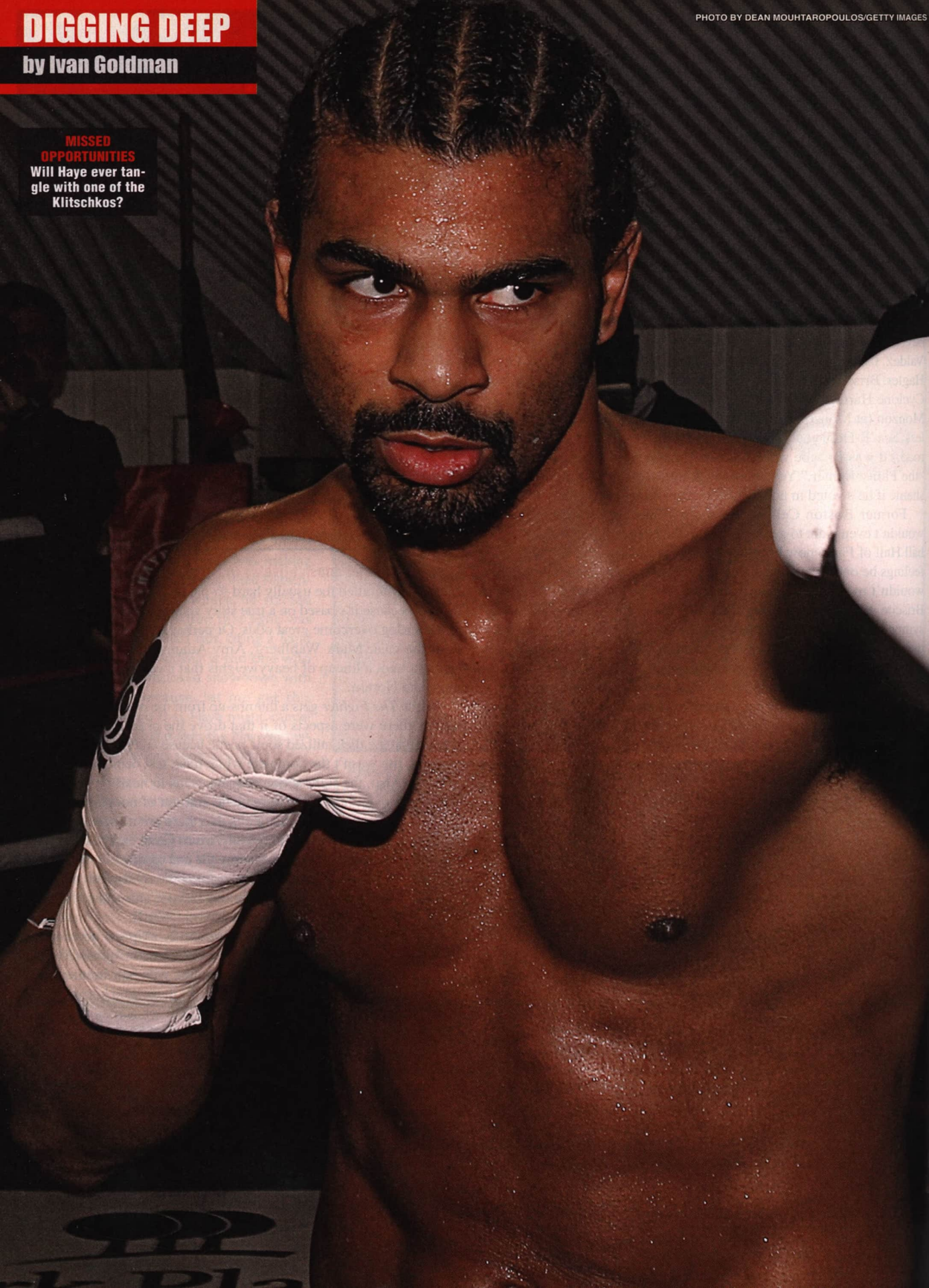


PHOTO BY DEAN MOUHTAROPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES
Will Haye ever tangle with one of the Klitschkos?

Loudmouth Haye: MIA

I used to agree it's a shame that skittish David Haye wouldn't step into a ring with one of the Klitschkos because, despite his personal quirks, the man has skills. We could use a competitive contest at the top of the heavyweight division.

Usually people need to be reminded that smaller fighters even exist. But these days, Floyd Mayweather-versus-Manny Pacquiao, a phantom welterweight bout that's never been put together and may never take place, gets way more attention from US fans than actual fights by reigning champ Wladimir Klitschko or number-one contender Vitali, his older brother.

Englishman Haye is precisely the kind of loudmouthed jerk who would attract attention from the general news media, putting big men back in their customary spotlight. But to beat a Klitschko, Haye's got to fight one, and his excuses so far range from legitimate to ridiculous. They are so numerous, shrill and relentless that they're no longer worth listing and evaluating. No, he can't hide behind his quirky manager or the United Kingdom's Sky Network, part of the sleazy, far-flung media empire of the sinister Rupert Murdoch. If Haye wanted the fight, he'd get it. Instead, he pursues a maddening dual strategy of baiting the Klitschkos while refusing to fight them.

These days, Haye, when not barking insults, also threatens to retire at the end of this year like some pouty kid ready to take his ball and go home.

As I write this, his camp is also making hints that perhaps he'll fight Vitali later this year. Perhaps, but

MAGOO

To David Haye, because enough is enough.

Haye already ducked out of a previous deal to fight him. Haye's like the comic strip Lucy who always promises Charlie Brown that this time she'll really, no fooling, let him kick the football. Once, the long-winded Brit backed out of an actual signed contract to face Wladimir. Later, he complained that the fight didn't happen. Weird but true. Wladimir wants this guy so badly he's already agreed to a 50-50 split. Nothing doing.

Fighters as a rule are gutsy people, but sometime you run into one who just doesn't have the mental fortitude to roll the dice with an opponent he considers capable of beating him. Such a man wants to be known as a fighter more than he wants to be one. The brash young Muhammad Ali talked plenty of trash, but he also sought and secured a shot at Sonny Liston. He didn't repeatedly bait him and then run for the hills at contract time. You could see Liston scared him, but Ali still welcomed the

TIRED OF HAYMAKER HASSLES
Wladimir isn't going to wait for Haye

PHOTO BY ALEX GRIMM/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

test. And once he got inside the ring, his mental toughness took over, and you know the rest.

The Klitschko brothers are a tag team, historically unique. Lose to one, and the other crosses you off his list as no longer worth fighting. Beat one, and either he or the other brother steps in to right the wrong. Their winning streak is seven years long, dating back to the night Lamon Brewster stopped Wlaidmir, a loss that Wladimir avenged personally in their rematch.

Even knowledgeable fans have trouble distinguishing Wladimir, 34, from his older brother. You get the feeling that if one of them signed for a fight and the other showed up in the corner, only their mother would notice. Recognizing this duality, Tomasz Adamek's promoter, as I write this, is negotiating a deal that would get him Wladimir in September—or Vitali if his kid brother is unavailable.

This shows the very real difference between someone who wants to fight a Klitschko and someone who wants to talk about fighting one. Adamek, 34, is a fighter with grit and talent. Aware that his competitive days have a shelf life, he moved up in weight precisely so he could snag a Klitschko-caliber payday before hanging up his gloves.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

READY AND WILLING
Adamek is penciled in for a shot against Wladimir

In the meantime, Vitali faces Odlanier Solis, 19-0 (17), March 19, and Wladimir fights Derek Chisora, 14-0 (9), on April 30. Those aren't exactly household names. Still, if these remarkable brothers don't retire, some fighter will eventually break their winning streak. But it will require someone willing to fight them.

Let's hope this time Lucy will actually let Charlie kick the football, that Haye will face 39-year-old Vitali this year. But there are ways the Klitschkos, if they use their imagination, could smoke him out and make it happen. They could, for instance, dye Vitali's hair white and make sure he's seen stumbling down a hospital corridor connected to an oxygen tank or helped across the street by Boy Scouts. Driving 20 miles down a highway with the turn signal on wouldn't hurt.

But if Vitali makes the deal, it's crucial that he stay in character until the moment he touches gloves inside the ring. A signed contract doesn't mean as much to Haye as it does to the rest of us. If he notices that his opponent is walking without a limp or breathing on his own, Haye can always break a rib in training and, neglecting to produce an X-ray, fly off to parts unknown.

WILL IT EVER HAPPEN?
Goldman has his doubts about Mayweather-Pacquiao

PHOTO BY MARY ANNE OWEN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Superfight Suspense

I read and hear from time to time that a Mayweather-Pacquiao fight is inevitable because of all the money it would generate. I disagree. Maybe the fight will take place eventually, but the analysts don't really know. They only pretend to know.

Yes, mountains of cold cash could very well outweigh the animosity between the two promotional companies and related civil suits that have yet to be decided. But there's a tricky ingredient here—the criminal justice system—that could turn all fight recipes to mud.

Stemming from separate episodes, the assault charges against Floyd and his trainer and good-luck charm Roger Mayweather have rendered them helpless when it comes to making long-term plans. Criminal courts show little consideration for training schedules, marketing campaigns, or TV dates. This creates way too much uncertainty to make a hundred-million-dollar fight possible.

As I write this, the two Mayweathers face hearings that in most such cases lead to more hearings. It's like climbing a ladder blindfolded. You have no idea how many rungs remain above you. Eventually, yes, it comes to an end, but not necessarily the end you hoped for. Rarely is there an actual trial. More commonly, attorneys dance around each other until they finally lock eyes and make a deal based on the two sides' relative strengths. Although the Mayweathers aren't locked up pending the outcome, they can't make any money until something gets settled. That gives bargaining chips to the prosecution.

I wasn't around when Floyd allegedly assaulted the mother of his children and absconded with their cell phones or possibly poked a security guard or when Roger allegedly choked and punched his female acquaintance, and I won't speculate on their guilt or innocence. But assault charges can lead to prison, especially when the defendants have rap sheets that look like Floyd and Roger's. Factor in the demands of Pacquiao's congressional duties, and it's easy to see how these two ships could pass in the night—or meet up too late to prove much of anything.

Bernard Hopkins versus Roy Jones could have been one of the greatest matches in decades. But first they fought too soon, and then they fought too late. And just about no one remembers either bout. That's why they say timing is everything.

THE HOPKINS MIRACLE

PHOTO BY TIM SNOW/HOGANPHOTOS/GBP

MIRACLE MAN
After a tough start, Hopkins figured out Pascal

If Jean Pascal ever gets into a ring with Hopkins again, it will come about only because—and boy, do I hate to say this—the WBC forced it on him. But the WBC is also the same corrupt, deluded organization that calls Julio Cesar Chavez, Jr. the second-best middleweight in the world after Sergio Martinez.

Remember when Hopkins used to fight only one or two minutes of every round? Apparently he was saving his strength for when he reaches his 45th birthday because now he fights all three minutes. You have to keep reminding yourself that you're actually seeing what you think you're seeing.

If you want to read how Hopkins got himself back into the Pascal fight after getting knocked down twice (the first thanks to an illegal rabbit punch), check out The Executioner's RING series on setting traps, which began in the January issue. After the first three rounds, he had the formidable Pascal figured out and lured him into one folly after another. Makes you appreciate just how sharp Jermain Taylor and Joe Calzaghe had to be when they beat Hopkins.

If Floyd eventually has to do time, he might return to the gym hungry for cash and make the same kind of amazing comeback as the Eagles' Michael Vick. But Vick is three years younger than Mayweather, 33, who competes in a more demanding sport. If "Money" loses half a step, he has no wide receivers or offensive linemen to cover for him.

And Pacquiao, 32, who's lately made a career out of competing against bigger men who can't deal with his movement, may just be smart enough to pack it in before they start to catch him. But it's not likely. How often do you see a fighter retire while he's still being offered good paydays?

Let's hope Floyd and Roger are innocent of everything, that they prove it, and do it fast, making all those writers who don't know what they're writing about look smart. ■

Ivan Goldman can be reached at ivangoldman@yahoo.com.

AT THE FIGHTS

WANT TO SEE YOURSELF IN THE RING MAGAZINE?

Send us your photos from a fight with you posing next to a celebrity, athlete, or other famous person and we will consider it for publication in the magazine. Send photos to celebrityphotos@sepublications.com. Make sure to include your name(s), the celebrity name(s), the fight attended, and your contact information. See you at the fights!

Michael J. Fox and Oscar De La Hoya at Mayweather-Mosley

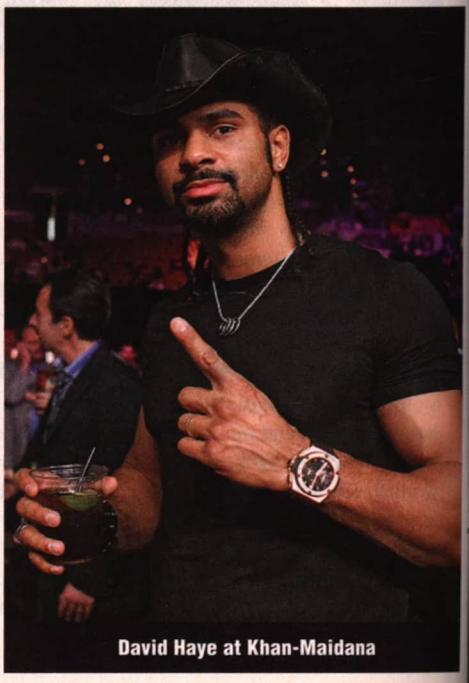
The O'Jays at Mayweather-Mosley

Chris Brown at Mayweather-Mosley

Miss USA Kristen Dalton at Mayweather-Mosley

Brian Adams and Chuck Zito at Adamek-Maddalone

Mike Tyson at WBO Intercontinental Championship



David Haye at Khan-Maidana

Leila Ciancaglini

Tale of the Tape

Height: 5'7"
Weight: 105
Measurements: 34-24-34
Stance: Ambidextrous
Reach: 26"
Favorite Fighter: Oscar De La Hoya
Hometown: Buenos Aires, Argentina
Current location: Calabasas, CA
Where you've seen her: *La Escuelita de la Maestra Canuta* (Canal de la Estrellas), *La Casa De La Risa* (Televisa), Freeway Insurance television advertisements

PHOTO BY JASON STITT

PHOTO BY JASON STITT

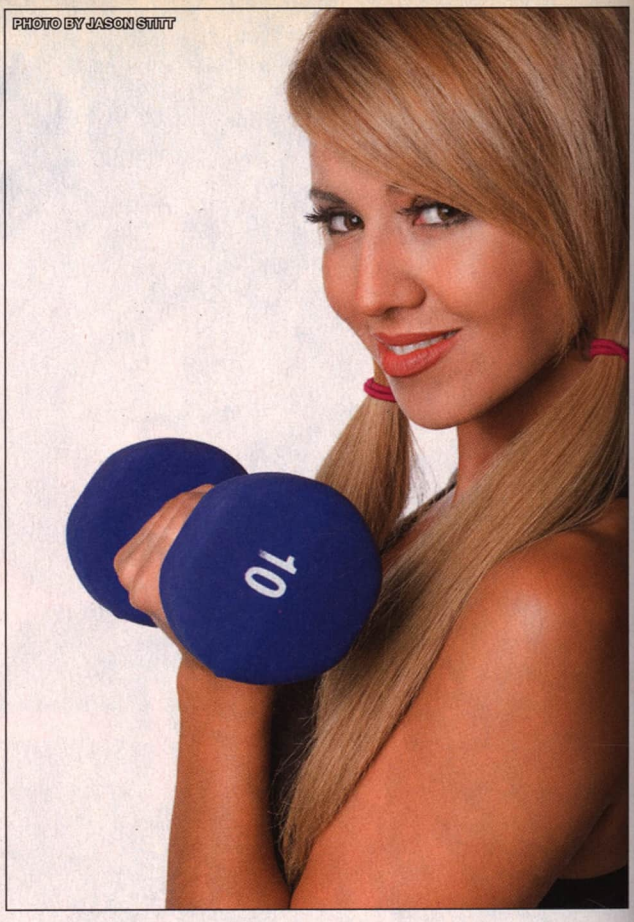


PHOTO BY JASON STITT

PHOTO BY JASON STITT

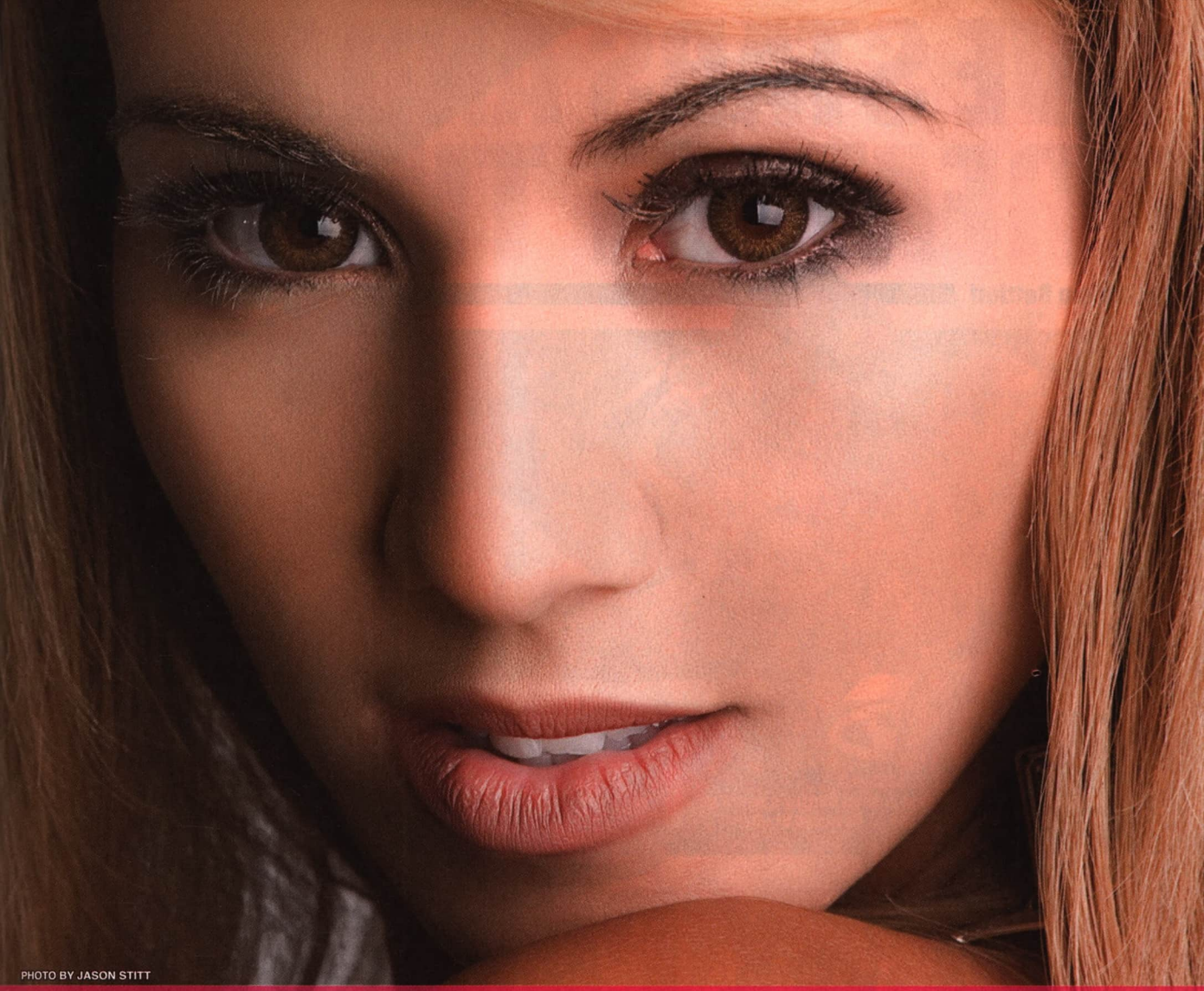


PHOTO BY JASON STITT

I understand that you not only model and actress but own a modeling agency in Los Angeles.
Yes, Ragazas LC Models is my agency and we have over 50 beautiful girls under contract. We focus on Latin girls for commercial modeling jobs but also have runway models and even a few guys.

How did you become an entrepreneur?
My cousin owns the largest fashion model agency in Argentina, so I had a head start and some good advice in the beginning.

Did the modeling or the agency come first?
I have been modeling since I was 16, so that came first.

I guess they start you out pretty young in Argentina, eh?
Yes, modeling is a very popular profession in Argentina, especially Buenos Aires. There are beautiful girls everywhere.

Can you wait a minute while I check the price of flights to Bueno Aires this weekend?
(laughs) You can stay with my cousin!

With all your work, how do you find any time to have fun?
I make time.

Doing what?
I love to travel. I just got back from the Bahamas. The water is so beautiful there.

Where else do you like to travel?
I have family in Milan so I like to visit Italy, especially Sardinia. Greece and Spain are also the best. I like going anywhere with warm sun and local people that enjoy living life and having fun.

Do you follow boxing?
At first, I did not, but my agency has been working with Tecate for eight years. So I have been to a lot of fights, and, now, I really love it.

What is the most memorable fight you have been to?
When Oscar fought Mayweather, that was an amazing event. So many famous people were there, and the energy inside the arena was amazing. Oh yeah, and the fight was pretty good too. *(laughs)*

Were you in the ring for that fight?
No, I had a bunch of girls working promotions for the event, so I still got to see the fight.

What other projects are you working on?
I have my TV show on Estrella TV, and I have a few parts in some movies that recently finished shooting titled: *The Extras*, *LA Fast Lane*, and *Assassins*.

Thank you, Leila, for being a wonderful and beautiful guest with us today. If people want to book you or any of the girls in your agency, how do they contact you?
They can either contact my agency, Ragazas LC Models, directly at (818) 679-8766 or visit our website at www.ragazas.net. Besos!

Do you want to be the next Ring Card Girl of the Month?

Submit photos and bio to ringcardgirl@sepublications.com.

FIVE STARS AND THEIR GREATEST THREATS

By William Dettloff

CLOTTEY CLOBBERED
Pacquiao gets a left hook past Joshua Clottey's guard en route to a one-sided decision at Cowboys Stadium.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

MANNY PACQUIAO

Record: 52-3-2 (38)

Current Status: By virtue of a whole string of wins over well-known, highly marketable, ever-larger, and mostly upper-tier fighters, Pacquiao has vaulted himself to the top of the pound-for-pound list, and, in view of Floyd Mayweather's inactivity, there can be little argument about it. But his victories in the ring, impressive as they are, make up only half the story. Pacquiao is a fan's fighter: humble, fearless, exciting, charismatic, gracious, and an expert finisher. If that wasn't enough, he has so ignited the passion of his Philippine countrymen they elected him a Congressman, as unlikely an office for a prizefighter as national treasurer. All this, combined with the brilliant and shrewd matchmaking and promotion of Bob Arum, has made Pacquiao, who will have his own wing in the Hall of Fame if this keeps up, an international superstar and a very wealthy man. Dog him for slumming against Shane Mosley if you want. Like it or not, he's earned the right.

Biggest Challenges Overcome: Where do we start with this guy? Overcame stifling poverty to become global superstar and one of the wealthiest athletes in the world … Won alphabet titles in eight weight classes (and RING championships in three) spanning 42 pounds over 10 years … Has beaten Juan Manuel Marquez, Marco Antonio Barrera (twice), Erik Morales (twice), Oscar De La Hoya, Ricky Hatton, Miguel Cotto, Josh Clottey, and Antonio Margarito … Is riding a 13-fight winning streak, including two kayo wins over Morales, the last man to beat him … Remains spectacularly popular despite fallout from collapse of fight with Mayweather and bad press from selection of Mosley for May fight.

Biggest Challenges Not Overcome: Still doesn't own a conclusive victory over Juan Manuel Marquez, who held him to a draw in 2004 and pushed him every moment in a close, bloody, split-decision victory for Pac-Man in 2008 ... After three-straight fights against prohibitive underdogs—Clottey, Margarito, and Mosley—is for the first time getting criticized for not taking on better, younger and/or fresher opponents … Reluctance to agree to Mayweather's drug-testing demands during first round of superfight negotiations caused some to wonder whether he had something to hide … Still can't carry a note, as evidenced by polite, uncomfortable applause he receives whenever he sings in a venue not located in the Philippines.

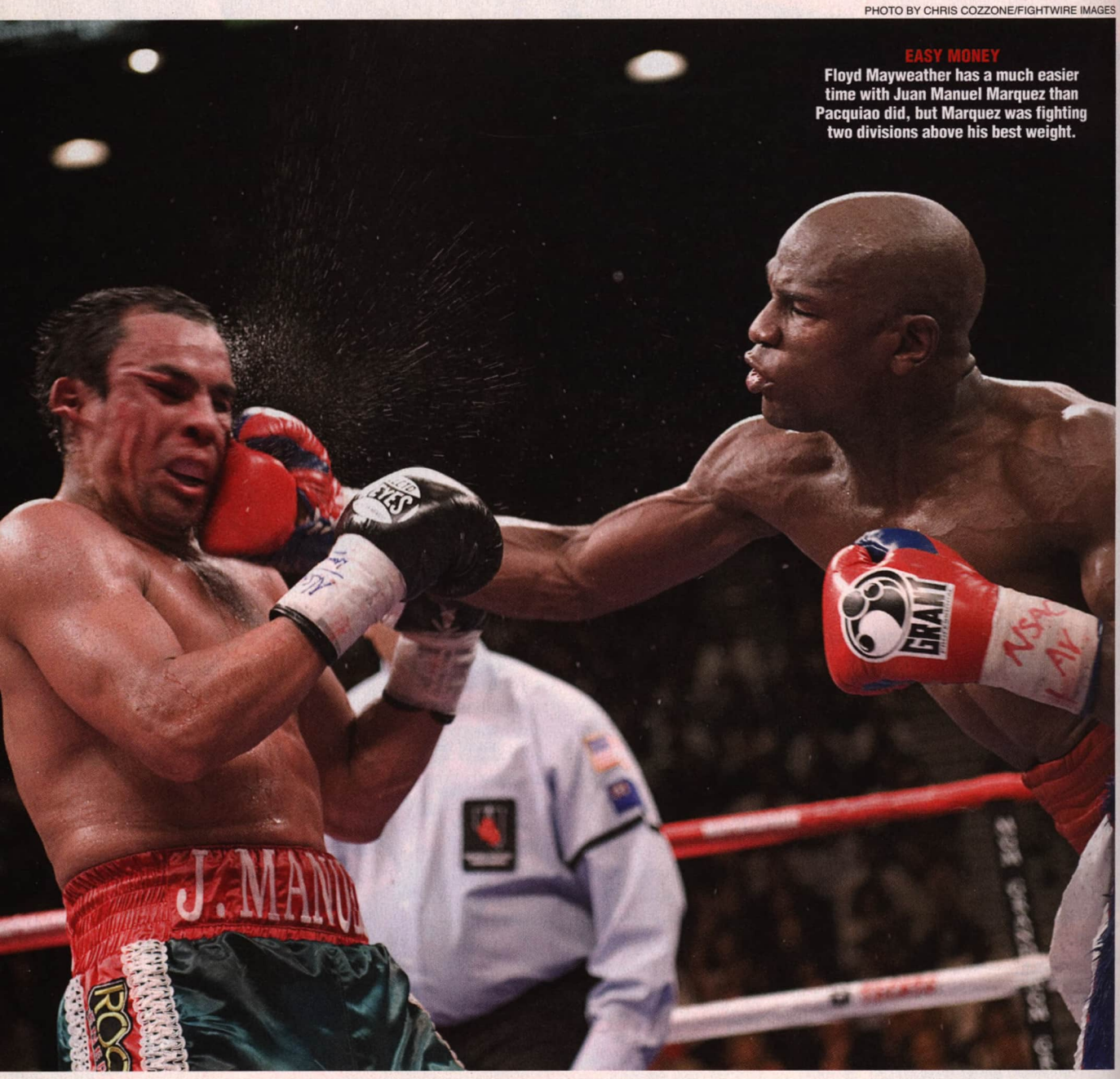
PHOTO BY NAOKI FUKUDA
TITLE

PACQUIAO'S BIGGEST THREATS

Floyd Mayweather

Why He's A Threat: The inside joke among a lot of old heads in this business is that for all the talk about Mayweather being "afraid" of Pacquiao, "Money" is the last guy Pacquiao should go looking for. Why? Speed. Skills. Defense. And more speed. Did we mention speed? The thinking goes like this: The only guy who's given the mature Pacquiao a pain in the ass is Juan Manuel Marquez, and what is he but a smaller, slower, less egomaniacal version of Mayweather? These bigger, bulkier guys Pacquiao keeps chopping down have no chance against him; they're too slow. It's the smaller, faster, slicker guys who give him trouble, and there is no one out there faster or slicker than Floyd Mayweather. Moreover, Mayweather would be highly unlikely to enter the ring starved and dehydrated save for a belly full of venison, walk blindly and headlong into Pacquiao's combinations, or attempt an insulting impression of Freddie Roach. Okay, maybe he'd do the last one, but the other two no way.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES



EASY MONEY
Floyd Mayweather has a much easier time with Juan Manuel Marquez than Pacquiao did, but Marquez was fighting two divisions above his best weight.

LIGHTWEIGHT CAMP
Marquez retained The Ring 135-pound championship in his most recent fight by impressively outslugging Michael Katsidis. Nonetheless, calls for a third fight with Pacquiao went unheeded.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Juan Manuel Marquez

Why He's A Threat: Look at it this way: In their match in 2004, Pacquiao put Marquez down three times in the first round and still had to fight hard and long to get a disputed draw. By the third round, Marquez had him figured out and clearly won the majority of the remaining rounds. In the rematch four years and five pounds later, a bomb of a left hand that floored Marquez in the third round was essentially the margin of victory; the scores were 115-112 and 114-113 for Pacquiao and 115-112 for Marquez. And to those who scoff at the notion of a fight now, when Pacquiao is so much bigger, should remember two things: Pacquiao gained 16 pounds after the weigh-in for the rematch and had a significant weight advantage even then, and, once you've got a guy's number, you've got it for good. Yes, Pacquiao has gotten better under Roach's tireless coaching, and he may indeed be too much for Marquez now, who is 37 and not as spry as he used to be. But when a guy twice fights you to a standstill, chances are good he can do it again.

Bob Arum

Why He's A Threat: Pacquiao's star has exploded over the last year or two, and few would dispute that Arum has had a large hand in the combustion. You can argue that Pacquiao has made himself a superstar, but no fighter in today's market, with no American television network exposure, could go it alone the way Ray Leonard did in the 1970s and expect to make it big. Even the best need an able abettor, and that's what Arum has been, pushing Pacquiao out there at every opportunity and selling, selling, selling. That's all good, right? Yes and no. Arum is a business man before he's anything else, and his job as he sees it, especially at this point in Pacquiao's career, is to make his fighter as much money as he can while taking the least amount of risk—hence the appearance of Clottey, Margarito, and Mosley consecutively on Pacquiao's dance card. Arum isn't interested in making the most interesting fights for Pacquiao or the fights that benefit the sport. What's the danger to Pacquiao? If he doesn't care about his legacy, none. If he does care, it might bother him down the road that he sold out in the last leg of his career instead of making the biggest imprint on the sport that he could.

PROMOTER PROBLEM?
Is Bob Arum wasting Pacquiao's talents and hurting his legacy by putting him in safe fights instead of pitting him against challenging opponents?

PHOTO BY DAVID BECKER/GETTY IMAGES

FLOYD MAYWEATHER

Record: 41-0-0 (25)

Current Status: Mayweather is universally considered no worse than the second-best fighter on the planet pound-for-pound, and there are enough among us who still believe him better than Pacquiao, despite Pacquiao's charming savagery and little-boy smile. For all his brilliance in the ring, which never has been in dispute, Mayweather remains at this writing a public relations disaster outside it, what with that video that went around with him calling Pacquiao all manner of insensitive names, several pending court dates that could land him in prison, and seemingly weekly appearances on TMZ, during which he can be seen terrorizing minimum-wage security guards. Not exactly a sympathetic figure. Nevertheless, if he never fights again, he's a first-ballot Hall of Famer and has the wins to prove it.

Biggest Challenges Overcome: Beat much more experienced and widely respected Genaro Hernandez to win first title in 1998 and made eight title defenses ... After gaining controversial points win over Jose Luis Castillo in 2002, engaged in immediate rematch and beat him conclusively … Eventually won titles in four weight classes … Over the next several years, successfully and without a lot of help from any promoters transformed himself into boxing's biggest pay-per-view star with wins over Oscar De La Hoya, Ricky Hatton, and Juan Manuel Marquez … Did all this while publicly feuding with his father and enduring myriad legal troubles involving trainer and uncle, Roger Mayweather … Successfully used HBO's *24/7* series to cast himself as villain, which helped sell the big fights … In last ring appearance, rebounded from near disaster in the second round to win every second of every remaining round against Shane Mosley.

Biggest Challenges Not Overcome: In the ring has overcome everything. Outside, not so much … Has unwittingly created impression that he is terrified of Manny Pacquiao, both by demanding strict drug-testing during initial negotiations and then by claiming no second round of negotiations had taken place, which later was proved untrue … Has long record of suspect behavior in and around Las Vegas and lately seems especially unable to stay out of the news—and not for his charitable acts or good deeds ... Seems unwilling or unable to control his temper in public settings, and his family life appears more chaotic than ever, which almost certainly accounts for recent inactivity … Hasn't figured out that if you're going to disparage an entire race of people it's best to not to do it where they can hear you.

SLAMMING SUGAR
Mayweather rocks Shane Mosley into the ropes during his most recent bout. Although Mosley stunned Floyd in the second round, Mayweather soon took control of the fight and won a unanimous decision by a wide margin.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

MAYWEATHER'S BIGGEST THREATS

Manny Pacquiao

Why He's a Threat: It's hard to know where to begin here. Mayweather has never met anyone with Pacquiao's ridiculous blend of speed, power, tenacity, and confidence. Plus, he's a southpaw. All the things that make Pacquiao a nightmare for everyone else are the things that make him a potential nightmare for Mayweather. Moreover, you can bet Pacquiao would see Mayweather as the most important fight of his career and wouldn't allow any of his many outside gigs to interfere with his training, as they did during his preparation for Margarito. Lastly, Mayweather's anti-Asian slurs would provide Pacquiao's army of fanatics with extra incentive to attend the fight and create an atmosphere of complete hostility for Mayweather. Maybe Mayweather's used to it, and it wouldn't bother him. We think he's more sensitive than that.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PAC POUNDS COTTO
Who knows if Mayweather and Pacquiao will ever fight, but one thing is sure, neither man has ever faced an opponent as talented as the other.

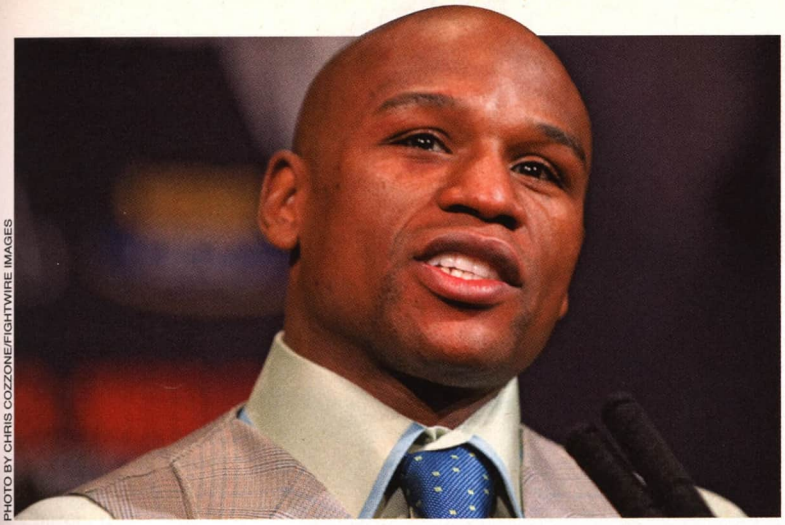


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

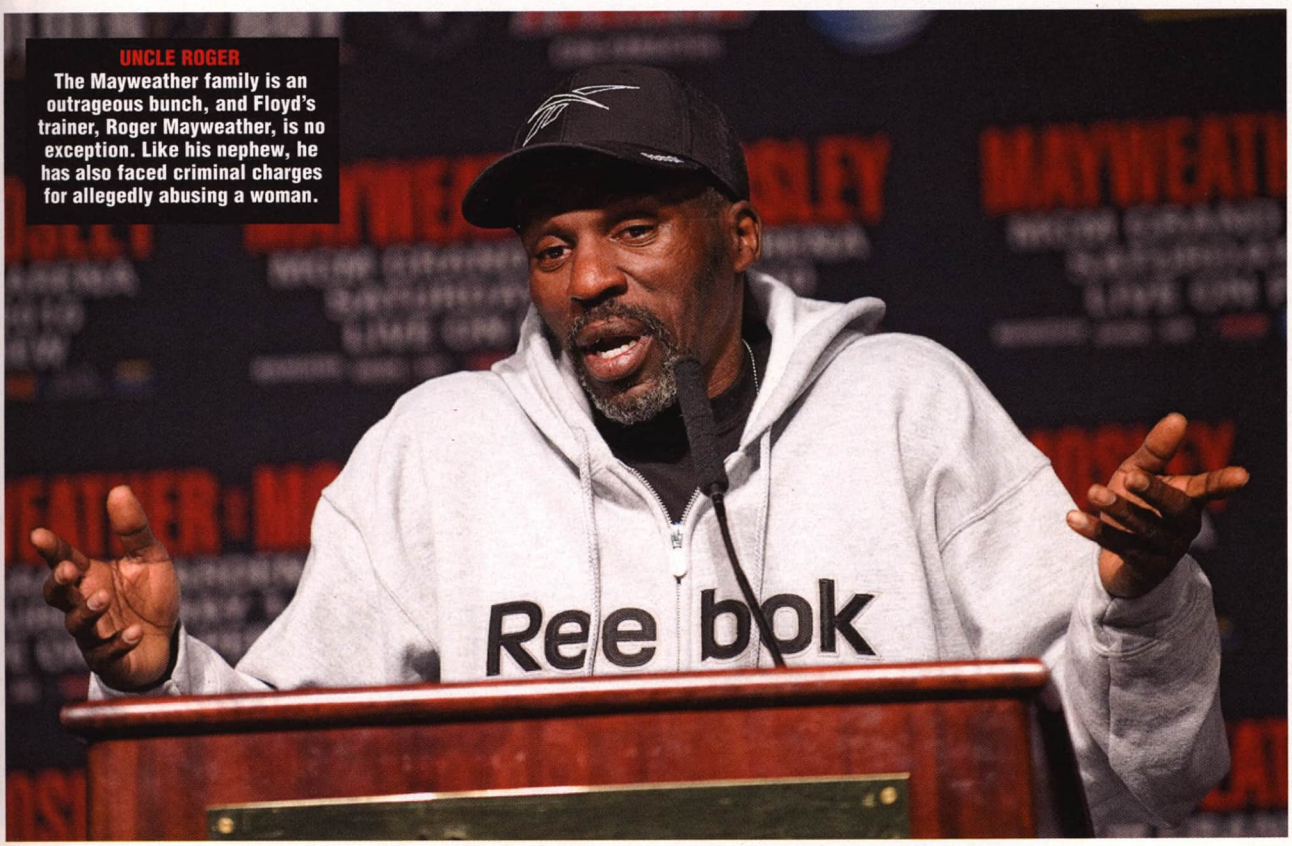
EGOMANIAC
Has Mayweather's gigantic ego led him astray and been responsible for some of his problems?

His Ego

Why It's A Threat: Let's face it: All the great fighters have very big egos; if they didn't, they wouldn't be great. Mayweather's may be bigger than most. By now, everyone knows the story of his encounter with Sugar Ray Leonard—no slouch in the area of outsized egos himself—during which he reportedly told Leonard that he, Mayweather, would have easily won a fight between the two had they met in their respective primes. So much for graciousness and respect for elders. Give Mayweather credit for this: At no time so far has his ego led him to believe he could whip an opponent without training for him. There is no better-conditioned fighter in the world. But the enormous self-belief and apparent narcissism as evidenced by his conduct outside the ring do not bode well for long-term success. One gets the sense that the wheels are coming off rapidly as this is written and that Mayweather's ego is loosening the bolts.

His Wacky Family

Why It's A Threat: The Mayweather clan is the oddest and most dysfunctional boxing family since the fighting Hilton brothers drank, slugged, and robbed their way through Montreal and the outlying areas in the 1980s and early '90s. You have Floyd Sr., who allegedly taught Little Floyd everything he needed to know to become the world's best fighter, did a stint in the penitentiary, and, when he got out, found out he'd created a monster. Wonder where Little Floyd got that ego? Listen to his dad take over press conferences telling everyone he's the greatest trainer who's ever lived. Freddie Brown's dusty bones must be doing somersaults. Then there's Uncle Roger, who became the first trainer in the history of HBO boxing to have his prefight comments recorded from behind bars. Sure, he's great fun, just like his brother, but really, these guys can't be a good influence on Little Floyd. They might be a bigger threat to him than any fighter could be, including Pacquiao.



UNCLE ROGER
The Mayweather family is an outrageous bunch, and Floyd's trainer, Roger Mayweather, is no exception. Like his nephew, he has also faced criminal charges for allegedly abusing a woman.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

PHOTO BY DAVID BECKER/GETTY IMAGES

SERGIO MARTINEZ

World Middleweight Champion
Record: 45-2-2 (24)

Current Status: Martinez has risen from obscure southpaw to world middleweight champion and one of the hottest names in the game in just two years. Wins over Kelly Pavlik and Paul Williams—and a loss to and draw against Williams and Kermit Cintron, respectively—proved his mettle and resilience. He's not the biggest name in the business and may not ever be, but he's exciting, gusty, and makes for good action fights. From all evidence, he also appears a class act disinterested in the theatrics and drama of fight game politics and marketing. He's just a fighter, a damned good one but just a fighter. How refreshing.

Biggest Challenges Overcome: Was floored in the opening moments of his first bout with Paul Williams then dropped Williams, better and harder, later in the round on the way to losing a close decision … Was not favored to beat Williams in the rematch and scored highlight reel second-round knockout … Didn't start boxing until the age of 20 but developed good skills anyway, aided by speed and mobility … Upset the odds in beating Kelly Pavlik for the title in an intense, bloody, 12-round struggle.

Biggest Challenges Not Overcome: As a young pup was stopped in seven rounds by Antonio Margarito, his only career kayo loss … Despite wins over top-level fighters, hasn't really grabbed attention of American fight fans yet … With perfect orthodontia, golden, unscarred skin, and male-model haircut, will have a hard time fitting in at the annual Boxing Writers Association Awards Dinner.

CRASH LANDING

Martinez heads for a neutral corner as Paul Williams falls to the floor as if he's been shot, but it was Martinez' left hand that did the damage.

PHOTO BY NAOKI FUKUDA

MARTINEZ' BIGGEST THREATS

ON DECK
Undefeated Sergei Dzinziruk, pictured en route to a TKO win over Daniel Dawson, is scheduled to be Martinez' next challenger and could turn out to be a very difficult opponent.

PHOTO BY DWIGHT MCCANN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Sergei Dzinziruk

Why He's a Threat: First off, Dzinrizuk, who, as we went to press, was reportedly scheduled to face Martinez on March 12, is almost everything Martinez is: fast, mobile, skilled, and left-handed. He's not as willing to get into a punch-out as is Martinez, but, when you've got wheels as good as his are, you don't have to be. And don't let Dzinrizuk's reputation as a slacker fool you. Though he didn't fight at all in 2009, twice in 2008, and just once in 2007, the guy is every bit the sharpshooter and precise counterpuncher Martinez is. The guy can fight, and, as a boxer/mover type, he won't give Martinez all kinds of counterpunching opportunities. He'll be a tough night.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

MEXICAN MAULER
Alfredo Angulo smashed Joel Julio into the ropes with a potent right hand. If the Mexican bomber can regain entry into the United States, he could be an extremely dangerous adversary for Martinez.

Alfredo Angulo

Why He's a Threat: Ever see this guy fight? It's like watching a swarm of Africanized bees attack a puppy. Angulo is all business and applies pressure and two-fisted power like no one Martinez has faced since Margarito. The odd thing is he priced himself out of a fight with Martinez last year and, not long after, was found to have been residing in the US illegally and deported. If he can get his immigration status cleared up, there's a good chance he and Martinez would meet. HBO loves Angulo because he makes exciting fights and they know as well as we do that he'd pressure Martinez from start to finish. You think Williams-Martinez I was good? This would make that look like Oliver McCall-Frank Bruno. Angulo is no joke.

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Kelly Pavlik

Why He's a Threat: Pavlik recently completed a stay at a rehab center for alcoholism, and his manager, Cameron Duncan, has said he's unsure if Pavlik will fight again. He should. He's got too much left to walk away already, including the memory of how well he was doing against Martinez until his right eye opened up in the ninth round. Pavlik lost the early rounds, came back to sweep the middle stanzas, and floored Martinez in the seventh. Just when it appeared he was taking over for good, Martinez tore open that eyebrow, and that was it for Pavlik. Martinez tortured him en route to the decision win. But what if he hadn't busted Pavlik open? And what's to say he'd open that cut again if they were to meet in a rematch? Pavlik had Martinez figured out going into the homestretch. There's no reason to think he couldn't pick up where he left off.

OPEN TARGET
Although Martinez won the decision and middleweight crown from Kelly Pavlik, the defending champ was holding his own until he suffered a nasty gash over his right eye.

JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ

World Lightweight Champion
Record: 52-5-1 (38)

Current Status: At his age, Marquez is supposed to be winding down his Hall of Fame career and looking toward retirement. Instead, he's busy climbing off canvases, whipping the tar out of hungry, rock-jawed sluggers half his age, and trying to shame Manny Pacquiao into one more dance. It's no way for a 37-year-old, 58-fight veteran to act. Is it? Maybe not, but that's not stopping Marquez. He's still the best 135-pounder in the world, still one of the best there is pound-for-pound, and still, by all accounts, a gentleman, if that kind of thing is important to you.

Biggest Challenges Overcome: Lost his pro debut via disqualification and then reeled off 29-straight wins before dubious loss to Freddie Norwood … Has won titles at featherweight, junior lightweight, and lightweight, along the way beating all-stars such as Marco Antonio Barrera, Rocky Juarez, Juan Diaz, and Joel Casamayor. Was down against Barrera and Mike Katsidis and also against Manny Pacquiao—three times in the first round!—in their first fight … Retained stellar reputation despite putrid performance against Floyd Mayweather.

Biggest Challenges Not Overcome: Will never live down going to Indonesia in 2006 for chump change and losing to the under-appreciated Chris John … Refuses to address questions involving why his breath smells like the men's room at Citi Field … Simply could not deal with Mayweather's speed and skill in one-sided decision loss … Twice fought courageously and skillfully against Pacquiao but could not get enough done to convince the judges to give him the win.

"DINAMITA" PERFORMANCE
Marquez came off the floor to stop hard-hitting Michael Katsidis in the ninth round in one of 2010's best action fights.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

MARQUEZ' BIGGEST THREATS

Manny Pacquiao

Why He's a Threat: Because he's Manny Pacquiao, which is enough, isn't it? Really, sometimes guys cry for a rematch after a close fight or two, and then, when they get it, they're sorry. Marquez has been lobbying for a third try at Pacquiao, but maybe he should remember what Pernell Whitaker did to Buddy McGirt when McGirt got the rematch he was begging for, just to cite one example of why one should be careful about what he wishes for. There is sufficient evidence that Marquez would give Pacquiao hell for a third time, but there is more that Pacquiao would win, as he did in their memorable rematch. He clearly has improved while Marquez has slipped a notch, and even those lobbying hardest for Marquez to get another go at Pacquiao do it on the grounds that he deserves it more than on the grounds that he will win it.

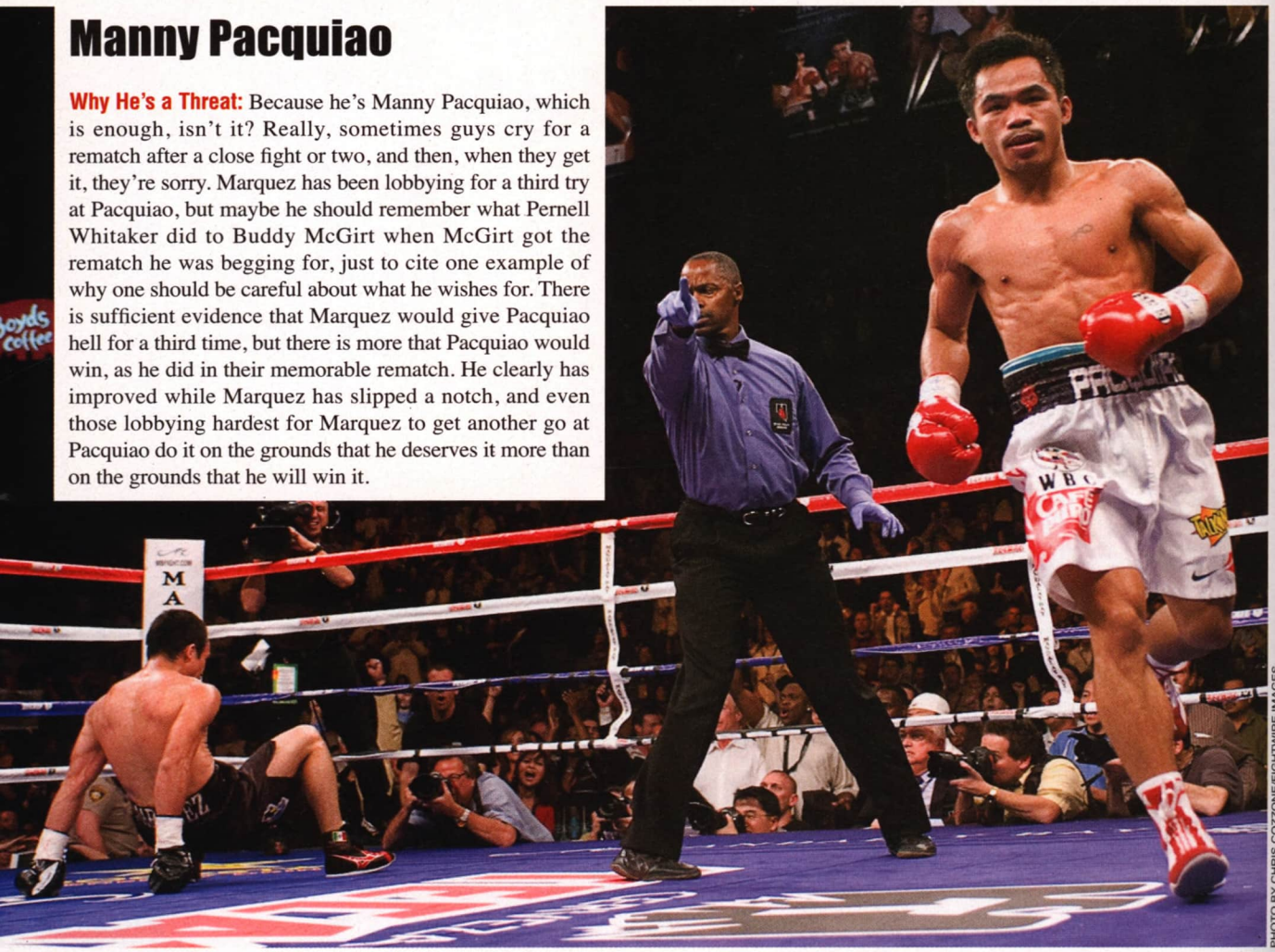


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

MARQUEZ TAKES A SEAT

Pacquiao eked out a 12-round split decision in his second bout with Marquez. The knockdown Manny scored was just about the only thing separating the rivals.

Humberto Soto

Why He's a Threat: Guys in this business have been underestimating Soto for as long as "La Zorrita" has been in business, and they continue to at their own peril. No, he couldn't do a thing with Joan Guzman, and no, he hasn't stopped anyone since moving up to 135 from junior lightweight a year ago. But he's also on a 10-fight winning streak including four in 2010 alone. And just when you thought he was slowing down—he's a rather old 30—he withstood 12 rounds of back-and-forth mayhem with Urbano Antillon in December, and he'll do it again in May. If he wins, he should get Marquez. He'll deserve it.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

CRAFTY LITTLE FOX

A lot of people overlook Humberto Soto, pictured on his way to a TKO of Benoit Gaudet, but he's a tough outing for any lightweight, including Marquez.

Old Age

Why It's a Threat: As someone might have mentioned once or twice along the way, Marquez is 37 years old. Not too shabby for you or us or the accountant next door or the garbage man down the street. For athletes, it's the bell tolling, and, for all but the most unusual prizefighters, the age around which one is likely to start getting his head handed to him by guys he would have toyed with a decade earlier. Marquez isn't made of steel, and he isn't Bernard Hopkins. He showed signs of slipping a couple years ago but has staunched the regression by some means or another, a deal with the devil perhaps. But that can't last forever. Sooner or later he's going to start acting his age, and it won't matter much whether it's against an average guy or another elite type. It'll happen sooner or later, and it won't be pretty.

WARRIOR'S FACE
Are all the fights catching up with the 37-year-old Marquez? This was how he looked after beating Juan Diaz a second time.

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

World Heavyweight Champion
Record: 55-3-0 (49)

Current Status: Klitschko finally has the respect, if not the adoration, of the entire boxing world, and he has earned it. It is not his fault HBO has lost interest in heavyweight boxing any more than it is his fault that America is more likely to erect a statue of Osama Bin Laden on Pennsylvania Avenue than it is to produce a homegrown heavyweight champion. Klitschko has done all that can be asked of any heavyweight champion save for providing excitement, and that's a subjective thing anyway. The Germans who fill arenas and applaud politely at his every landed jab seem excited enough, and who are we to argue? Besides, look again at the man's record. It is superb. He is the best heavyweight prizefighter on the planet, and not by a little.

Biggest Challenges Overcome: Has beaten every viable heavyweight of the last five or six years, save for his brother, including Sam Peter, Chris Byrd, Hasim Rahman, Eddie Chambers, Ruslan Chagaev, Sultan Ibragimov, Calvin Brock, and more … Rebounded from knockout losses to Ross Puritty, Corrie Sanders, and Lamon Brewster to become one of history's more consistent champs, totally retooling style along the way … Despite reputation as a passionless jabber, has knockout ratio of 84 percent, ranking among the top of all heavyweight champs.

Biggest Challenges Not Overcome: Didn't get the chance or wasn't interested in avenging defeats to Puritty or Sanders, though he did stop Brewster in their rematch in 2007 … Cannot shake the impression, at least among American fans, that he is always one solid punch away from disaster and fights in a safety-first posture as a result … Will never have the chance to prove that he is better than older brother Vitali, who holds WBC belt.

FIGHTING TALL
Klitschko has learned how to best take advantage of his height and reach, as is illustrated by the long-distance jab he's planting on the face of Eddie Chambers.

PHOTO BY CLEMENS BILAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY CLEMENS BILAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

KLITSCHKO'S BIGGEST THREATS

David Haye

PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

Why He's a Threat: Haye is perhaps the last of a nearly extinct breed: the strong, fast, athletic heavyweight of above-average but not gargantuan size. He's more athletic and fluid than Chagaev, bigger and stronger than Byrd, Chambers, and Brock, younger and fresher than Peter, Rahman, or Tony Thompson. He's a one-punch kayo threat, or close to it, and oozes confidence and style. Many believe his defensive liabilities and a questionable chin render him no match for Klitschko, but it says here that his right hand and speed make him dangerous for as long as he's standing. Recent negotiations for a showdown fell through (again), but, in this business more than any other, never say never.

BRITISH BOMBER
Although negotiations to make a match with David Haye fell apart yet again, if the Englishman ever faces Wladimir, the outcome will not be a foregone conclusion. Haye is fast, athletic, and has a wicked right hand.

Emanuel Steward

Why He's a Threat: Don't get us wrong—Steward saved Klitschko's career, helping to slowly restore his confidence after the loss to Brewster, tightening up the giant's defense, and getting him more than anything to stay behind that jab. But Steward created a monster, one that was so content to jab even the most compliant opponents into submission (see Klitschko W 12 Ibragimov) rather than try for the stoppage that he now must, and often does, badger Klitschko into taking chances. So far, Steward, who's always been an offensive-minded trainer, has been right on the money: Klitschko pulverized Chambers in the last round at Steward's absolute insistence. But what happens when Steward, trying to make his champion a bit more appealing, tells him to step it up, and the big guy walks into one that puts him on his back? It could happen.

CHAMP AND TRAINER
Emanuel Steward applies grease to Klitschko's face prior to a sparring session. Will the trainer put Wladimir in harm's way by pushing him to go for the knockout?

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Boredom

Why It's a Threat: Even the most driven among us get bored eventually doing the same thing over and over, and Klitschko wouldn't be the first fighter in history to underestimate a challenger—Derek Chisora, for example—and get complacent. You can say Klitschko's work ethic is such that he trains hard for everyone, but there were signs he hadn't prepared properly for Sanders and look what happened then. There will come a time sooner or later when, between Wladimir and Vitali, there won't be a man over 200 pounds who owns a pair of boxing gloves that hasn't been beaten up by a Klitschko. The temptation to cut a corner here or there before that happens must be tremendous. The chance exists that sooner or later temptation will win out. Even against a Klitschko. ■

POLKA TIME
Dressing in lederhosen and hanging out with actress girlfriend Hayden Panettiere is one way to keep boredom at bay. But will the heavyweight champion become complacent following so many easy fights?

PHOTO BY TONI PASSIG/GETTY IMAGES

THE EXECUTIONER
The meaning of Bernard Hopkins' nickname has undergone a transformation as he has adapted his style in order to fight successfully into his 40s.

PHOTO BY GENE BLEVINS/HOGAN PHOTOS/GBP

JABBING AT FATHER TIME

Unlocking The Secrets Of Late-Career Success

By Lee Groves

Time.

No matter how independent a person may be, most are bound by Time's strictures. Calendars, clocks, and watches serve as reference points for the rhythms of life, for Time determines when we awaken, when we work, when we eat, when (and what) we watch on TV, and when we rest.

Time can also be a silent enemy. Whether it is travelers hustling to board connecting flights, businessmen negotiating under a hard deadline, or athletes compelled to produce game-changing heroics, each passing second exerts a crushing pressure to perform. Because Time waits for no man, he gets one shot at shaping his fate. No matter the result, Time will always linger in the background.

Boxing history is replete with fighters who chose to tussle with Time far too long, but every rule has exceptions. For whatever reasons, a remnant of middle-aged marvels managed to meld youthful gifts with the insights only veterans can know. Against athletes young enough to be their sons and talented enough to inflict serious harm, these geriatric giants made the impossible seem routine.

Some names, Archie Moore, George Foreman, Eder Jofre, Bob Fitzsimmons, and Larry Holmes among them, continue to resonate through the fistic firmament. And the beat, however creakily, goes on as today's contenders and titlists include Glen Johnson (41), Giacobbe Fragomeni (41), Vitali Klitschko (39), Luiz Lazarte (39), Shane Mosley (39), Guillermo Jones (38), Danny Green (37), and Juan Manuel Marquez (37).

In the waning hours of December 18, at the Pepsi Coliseum in Quebec City, Bernard Hopkins, today's most decorated elder statesman, appeared poised to rewrite the history books again. Over the course of 12 tense rounds, Hopkins rebounded from two early knockdowns to dominate the second half of the fight against newly crowned RING light heavyweight champion Jean Pascal. When the final bell sounded, many were convinced that Hopkins, at 45 years, 348 days old, was about to supplant George Foreman (45 years, 310 days) as the oldest man ever to win a major boxing championship.

American judge Steve Morrow agreed as he saw Hopkins a 114-112 winner, but Canadian Claude Paquette (113-113) and Belgian Daniel Van de Wiele (114-114) overruled him. Yes, the draw that was roundly booed allowed Pascal to keep his light heavyweight belt, but it also mortally wounded his star power. That's because, on paper, Pascal-Hopkins was the classic "pass-the-torch" fight in which the young stud is supposed to dispense of an aging warhorse before passionate partisans. Instead, the timid Pascal fumbled the exchange, and the flame of his title reign was nearly snuffed out.

How does Hopkins continue to baffle the experts? How does he get away with taunting Time when others couldn't? What traits does he share with others who had kept age at arm's length? The reasons can be boiled down to the three Ds:

Dedication to Defense: While still in his 20s, Hopkins made a wise but pivotal decision to learn the vital but unglamorous intricacies of defense. He couldn't have asked for better instructors than Bouie Fisher and Naazim Richardson, who taught him glove positioning, how to roll away from punches without compromising his ability to counter, how to use angles to hide from opponents, and so on.

The years of endless drills have reaped tremendous rewards. Not only was Hopkins able to extend his career, he also lengthened his ability to generate multi-million dollar purses and, most importantly to this old-school soul, his chances to enhance his legacy.

Unlike many instinctual artists who can't grasp how they do what they do, Hopkins can explain the "how" and "why" behind every maneuver. His "Perfect Execution" column in THE RING offers a literary and pictorial window into the secrets of his success far after 40.

His sophisticated techniques have flummoxed a succession of elite opponents, and there are numbers to prove it. One CompuBox study revealed that Jermain Taylor threw 30 percent fewer overall punches and landed 63 percent less power shots against Hopkins than against his three previous opponents. The same pattern continued with Antonio Tarver (43.7 percent fewer thrown punches and nearly 70 percent less power connects), and Winky Wright (19.7 percent fewer thrown punches per round and 54 percent less power connects). This ability to neutralize his opponents' offenses not only added years to his career but may also increase his prospects of enjoying a high quality retirement.

This attention to detail also worked wonders for others. Moore and Foreman used the cross-armed "armadillo defense" to pick off and roll under punches, while Holmes and Vitali Klitschko masterfully used their height and reach to stifle opponents. Although Marquez adopted a more fan-friendly approach in his mid-30s, he still incorporates the

COMING ON STRONG

In his most recent fight, the 45-year-old Hopkins came back from two early knockdowns to hold the 28-year-old light heavyweight world champion Jean Pascal to a 12-round draw. Many observers thought B-Hop had done enough to win.

PHOTO BY TIM SNOW/HOGAN PHOTOS/GBP

PHOTO BY NAOKI FUKUDA

THE OLD MONGOOSE

Archie Moore was already 36 years old when he beat Joey Maxim to win the light heavyweight championship in 1952. Even more amazing is the fact that he held the title for almost 10 years.

techniques taught to him by Hall of Fame trainer Ignacio "Nacho" Beristain, just as the 37-year-old Jofre did en route to capturing an improbable featherweight title against Jose Legra in 1973.

While getting hit is inevitable, all these men knew that minimizing the punishment in the short term would improve their results in the long term.

Determination to Change: As we all know, boxers can be stubborn. Too many fighters adopt a my-way-or-the-highway attitude when it comes to changing their styles, especially when that style served them so well. How can anyone argue against fame, fortune, and championships?

Given his success, one would think the headstrong Hopkins would have been reluctant to shift gears. After all, his wrecking-ball right allowed him to win 14 of his first 23 fights in three rounds or less, and seven of his first eight middleweight title defenses ended inside the distance. One of them—a 24-second blowout of Steve Frank in January 1996—remains the briefest 160-pound title fight on record.

But as Hopkins neared his mid 30s, he realized changes were needed to achieve two long-term goals—surpassing Carlos Monzon's divisional record of 14 defenses and lengthening that benchmark to 20. Gradually, the meaning behind his "Executioner" nickname changed. Instead of letting brute force act as judge, jury and, ahem, executioner, Hopkins used his considerable boxing IQ to flawlessly "execute" fight plans.

Where once he relied on power, he now banked on judicious timing, excellent punch placement, laying strategic land mines, practicing the darker arts outside the referee's view, a refined sense of pacing, and seizing upon his rivals' weaknesses.

It also helped that Hopkins had a kindred spirit in Richardson, who spoke these words between rounds five and six of the Pascal fight:

"We aren't going into the big swinging mode with him. We're not looking for one

home run. He's going big, and we're going to put small shots underneath. That's why he fades: He goes big and he starts missing and he gets tired. He's weakening already. I need you to stay behind that stick and make them investments."

A younger Hopkins wouldn't have been so receptive to implementing Richardson's patient strategy, especially when down on the scorecards. But the mature, pragmatic Hopkins methodically applied it with well-placed bodyshots, selective multi-punch bursts, and the kind of measured, relentless stalking that inflicts physical *and* psychological pressure.

From that point forward, Hopkins slowly drained Pascal's legs while yielding few countering opportunities, which kept Pascal's already sparse output under control. Then, in the pivotal 11th and 12th rounds, Hopkins jammed his foot on the accelerator and almost left Pascal choking on his dust.

The older version of Archie Moore was an extraordinarily long-suffering fighter, for he often chose to defend plenty of incoming fire before striking with chilling finality. His classic first encounter with Yvon Durelle in 1958 saw the 42-year-old Mongoose absorb four early-round knockdowns only to score four of his own en route to a thrilling 11th-round kayo.

Foreman's Christian conversion produced profound changes in the ring and out, as the onetime mad bomber now worked behind a thumping jab and repeatedly asked referees to grant mercy on his battered opponents. Still, his knockout percentage hardly suffered.

The early Holmes was a dancing master with a heavy Ali influence, but, after his legs lost their bounce, Holmes persevered by putting more weight behind his jackhammer jabs and potent right crosses. Micky Ward was once a fleet-footed boxer, but, after returning from a three-year hiatus, he prospered into his late 30s by becoming a slugger armed with a sickening hook to the liver. All these men proved that change, indeed, is good.

Defiance Becomes You: Every fighter approaching his mid 30s has heard these refrains: "Boxing is a young man's game," "Aren't you worried about your health?" "When are you going to hang up the gloves?" or "Why can't you give the younger guys a chance?"

Like most successful professionals, fighters are fueled by pride. The last thing they want to hear is that they aren't what they used to be and that they should quit the most lucrative and successful job they've ever had. Boxers, especially champions, want to depart on their own terms, and they would gladly give their last drop of blood to prove naysayers wrong.

Foreman countered his critics by regaining the linear heavyweight title. Moore answered by winning a world championship at 36 and holding it for nearly 10 years. The ever-prickly Holmes, who lost his IBF belt at 35, came within a whisker of dethroning WBC titleholder Oliver McCall a decade later and fought until age 52.

FORMIDABLE FOREMAN
Cynics were no longer laughing at George Foreman's comeback by the time he knocked out Gerry Cooney in 1990. Four years later, at the age of 45, Big George regained the heavyweight championship by knocking out Michael Moorer.

STILL SWEET?
"Sugar" Shane Mosley will turn 40, four months after his fight with Manny Pacquiao, scheduled for May 7. Unlike Hopkins, Mosley does not seem to be trying to change his style to accommodate his aging body.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

AGELESS WONDER
Former lightweight contender Kenny Lane (left) was 53 years old when he lost a split decision to Dave Guerra in Lane's final bout, in 1985. Lane had turned pro in April 1953.

LARRUPING LARRY
In his last successful title defense, heavyweight champ Larry Holmes won a 15-round decision over Carl "The Truth" Williams. By then, Holmes was using less movement and more power to defeat younger fighters.

Kenny Lane and Carlos Palomino emerged from 17-year layoffs and went 3-1 and 4-1, respectively, before retiring at 53 and 48. Willie Pep ended a six-year retirement just because he thought he could and rolled off nine-straight wins before losing his final fight at 43. Those who have stood at the summit will do anything to reach it again and to hell with those who want to deny them that pleasure.

Hopkins had planned to retire by age 40 to satisfy his mother's final wish and his ninth-round kayo over Oscar De La Hoya four months before that deadline seemed the perfect swan song. But after she died, Hopkins believed he still had mountains to conquer. At first, his decision seemed unwise as he lost two decisions to Jermain Taylor after outpointing Howard Eastman. The controversial nature of the Taylor fights persuaded Hopkins that he still had plenty in the tank. Therefore, he soldiered on and the results were the stuff of legend.

First, he added 15 pounds of muscle and challenged lineal 175-pound king Antonio Tarver, who was fresh off back-to-back wins over previous conquerors Roy Jones and Glen Johnson. Hopkins told everyone that this would be his final fight, but Tarver further fueled the fire by placing a $250,000 side bet that he would score a knockout within five rounds. Instead, Hopkins scored his own fifth-round knockdown and earned a lopsided decision.

Then, after outpointing Winky Wright and a split-decision loss to Joe Calzaghe, Hopkins again confounded the experts by thrashing Kelly Pavlik, an unbeaten power puncher poised to become the face of boxing. That build-up deeply offended Hopkins, who believed the sport's power brokers again were ready to shove him into a premature grave. For that, he made everyone pay.

"If I would have stuck to my promise, you would have never got to eat crow," Hopkins told ESPN.com before the Pascal fight. "You would have never gotten to write about the night in Atlantic City [after beating Pavlik]. After the Tarver fight, I could have easily stepped aside. But look at what you all would have been denied."

See that chip on Hopkins' shoulder? It's Stonehenge's twin.

Hopkins followed the Pavlik upset with decisions over Enrique Ornelas and Jones, and then the disputed draw against Pascal. The Pascal performance surely will push back B-Hop's Hall of Fame induction, but he probably wouldn't mind, for he knows there's more to do.

The hours, minutes, days, and years may be the same length for all of us, but, for a few special champions, Time can be molded, manipulated—and yes—conquered. ■

Lee Groves is the author of* Tales From the Vault *and a writer/researcher/punch counter for CompuBox Inc.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

BOXING'S BIGGEST ENIGMA

What Went Wrong For Mayweather And How It Could Have Been Different

By Don Stradley

> **"I see the haters a mile away ... From my Yacht of course lol"**
>
> —Floyd Mayweather on Twitter, December 2010

Shortly before his most recent round of legal problems, Floyd Mayweather was granting little interviews here and there, talking about how blessed he feels and about giving back to the community. Another popular topic was his recent engagement to his longtime girlfriend, Shantel Williams. Mayweather hinted at plans for a new reality TV show for the two of them to star in. Mostly, though, he talked about Twitter.

According to TwitterCounter.com, Mayweather has nearly 900,000 followers, which ranks him as approximately the 360th most popular Twitter user. He's well behind Lindsay Lohan, but, at press time he was on the verge of passing Ivanka Trump.

Years ago, we had all looked forward to the day when Mayweather's popularity would catch up to his skills. We imagined he could become that rare and desired boxing commodity—the fighter who was not only great in the ring but also famous enough to get mainstream attention. Not since the early days of Mike Tyson have we had a fighter who was immensely popular as well as being a dominant ring figure. Oscar De La Hoya had the fans but was never considered the best in the world; Roy Jones had the skills, but couldn't put butts in the seats. As Mayweather proved to be a valid pay-per-view draw, it seemed our search for an all-around superstar was over.

Unfortunately, a number of factors have kept Mayweather from reaching the absolute, unquestioned pinnacle of the sport, not the least of which was that Manny Pacquiao draws as well if not better, is a more exciting performer, and possesses a more interesting back-story.

But it is not just Pacquiao who makes Mayweather's career seem only partially realized.

If we could whittle our thoughts down to a list of 10 things that kept Mayweather's career from being all it could be, it would read something like this:

10. He Was Given Too Much Too Soon

Mayweather often says he wasn't properly promoted early on, but, considering he started his career as a bronze medalist from the 1996 Olympic team, he did very well: HBO fawned over him, and Bob Arum treated him like a superstar. Floyd also happened to come along when HBO was giving truckloads of cash to fighters who looked promising. The result was that Mayweather was a millionaire long before he'd done anything noteworthy. Then he complained that it wasn't enough. Slave wages, indeed.

What If Things Were Different? Would Mayweather be more palatable had he come up the hard way, fighting for smaller purses with much less fanfare? Maybe not. That's how his father and uncle came up, and they're pains in the ass too. But maybe he wouldn't have had such an inflated sense of himself in the early days of his career. And maybe it would've occurred to him to take a risk now and then. Where's the incentive to fight thrilling fights when you already have a closet full of furs and jewels?

9. The Ways Of The Mayweather Men

Speaking of dear Uncle Roger and Daddy Floyd, one wonders what sort of role models they were during Mayweather's formative years. Some of the personal issues Mayweather is dealing with are similar to problems experienced by both Roger and Floyd Sr. Let's just say that the Mayweather men have a particular way of doing things, and it often gets them in trouble. Maybe Floyd should've spent more time in the company of his Uncle "Jazzy" Jeff, a Mayweather male who seems less volatile.

What If Things Were Different? Had Mayweather grown up in a Brady Bunch/Bill Cosby type of setting, he probably wouldn't be a fighter. Still, had he been exposed to a different sort of trainer/father figure at an early age, perhaps an Eddie Futch or a Freddie Roach, he might've seen that aping his relatives wasn't the best way to go, and he might not be in trouble so often.

8. He Has Brittle Hands

Granted, they haven't been a problem in recent bouts, possibly because he doesn't fight often, but there was a long period when we didn't even want to tune in to a Mayweather bout because we knew he'd just slap and pot shot for 12 rounds, fearing another hand injury.

What If Things Were Different? A Floyd Mayweather with sturdier hands would have scored more knockouts and would be an even bigger star than he is now. He would've been getting pay-per-view bouts earlier in his career and the mainstream coverage would've come earlier too.

7. He Became Too Defensive-minded

It happens to all fighters. They realize there is something they do well, and then they rely on it too much. After Shane Mosley wobbled him last year, you can be sure Mayweather won't be sticking his chin out again any time soon.

What If Things Were Different? Some of his bouts wouldn't have been so deadly dull, that's what. And if fans didn't have him pegged as a defensive bore, he wouldn't have to put on his obnoxious act to hype his fights.

UNCLE ROGER & DADDY FLOYD

Mayweather's uncle (left) and father (right) have not been the best role models. True, they taught him an awful lot about boxing, but their personal lives have been even messier than his.

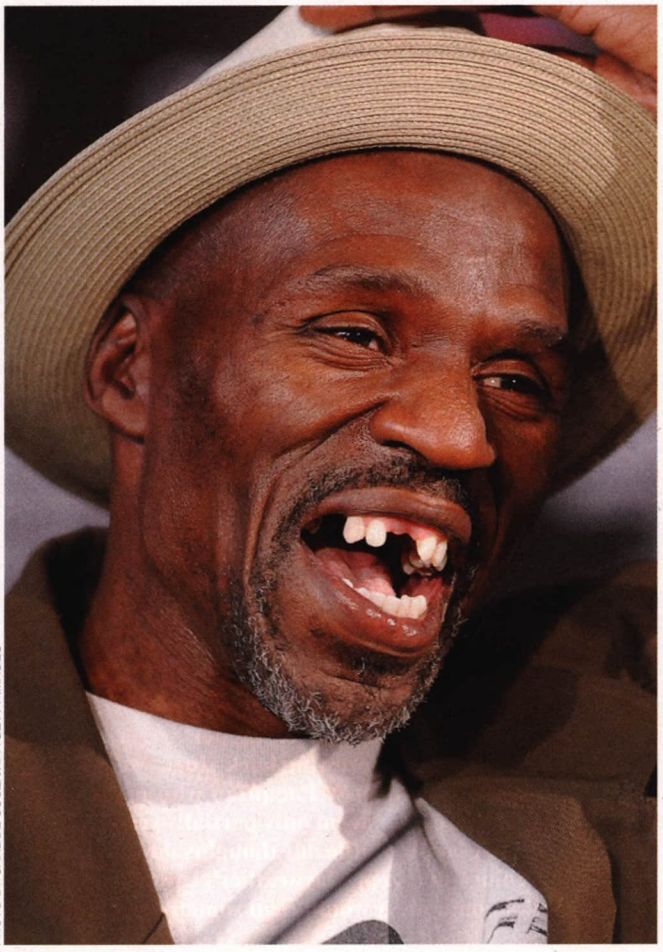


PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY ISAAC BREKKEN/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

RELUCTANT FINISHER
Think how different the boxing landscape would be if Mayweather had gone for the gusto and knocked out Oscar De La Hoya. Instead, he was satisfied with a split decision.

6. He Became A Perfectionist

To borrow a line from George Foreman, "Boxing is sort of like jazz. The better it is, the less people appreciate it."

Certain jazz musicians remind us of Mayweather. They play a tasteful set, but they never cut loose and are not particularly moving. That's how Mayweather fights. Of course, he'd accuse us of being ignoramuses who don't appreciate the subtleties of his style. Either that or he'd throw a phone at us.

What If Things Were Different? He would've seen that Mosley, and Juan Manuel Marquez before him, was ready to be taken in the later rounds and he would have stopped them. Instead, Mayweather was content to win rounds and take no risks.

5. He Played It Safe On The Biggest Night Of His Life

With more eyes upon him than ever before, Mayweather entered the ring to face Oscar De La Hoya, and, rather than give us a night to remember, he pecked out a tepid win by split decision. When he realized De La Hoya was fading after the sixth round, Mayweather should've pressed the action and knocked De La Hoya out. That's what Pacquiao did, and stopping Oscar turned "Pac-Man" into P-A-C-M-A-N. True, De La Hoya was a shot fighter when Pacquiao beat him, but he was pretty close to being shot when he fought Floyd.

What If Things Were Different? If Mayweather had stopped De La Hoya, we're pretty sure Golden Boy would've retired soon after, which would've denied Pacquiao his own chance on the world stage. And if Pacquiao hadn't destroyed De La Hoya, there's no telling how the boxing landscape would've looked in recent years.

4. He Became A Control Freak

He's been criticized for not fighting various fighters, but we don't think this has anything to do with fear. We figure he doesn't like being told what to do. Our own theory about Mayweather's demands for Olympic-style drug testing is that he's less concerned with cleaning up the sport than he is with controlling people. Mayweather never talked about drug testing when he was making his own march from featherweight to junior middleweight, but now that he's settled in at 147, with the world demanding he face Pacquiao, he's suddenly concerned about the health and welfare of fighters and making sure that everyone is fighting fairly. But his negotiations with Pacquiao showed his priorities: It's less important for Mayweather to fight than it is to be viewed as a man who calls the shots.

What If Things Were Different? He'd have fought Pacquiao last year. And going back in time, he would've fought Joel Casamayor, Acelino Freitas, Kostya Tszyu, Antonio Margarito, and Miguel Cotto. 'Nuff said.

3. He "Retired"

Vanishing is never good for a person's career. While Mayweather's 2008-'09 sabbatical didn't seem to harm him athletically or as a box-office attraction, it allowed Pacquiao to gain momentum as the sport's top name.

What If Things Were Different? Had he stayed active, Mayweather could've been the guy to whip Paul Williams. Then again, he probably wasn't going to fight Williams. He would've picked easier opponents (see number 4).

2. He Remains Immature

Emanuel Steward has often said Mayweather is like a big kid. There's nothing wrong with that, but sometimes Mayweather seems out of touch with the real world. He lives in a strange bubble filled with yes-men and flunkies who don't dare upset the spoiled child-king. He released a video on the Internet in 2010 where he hurled racial and homophobic taunts at Pacquiao. In 2007, he was videotaped in a studio doing an equally offensive rap. There's a bit of the Michael Jackson/Tiger Woods syndrome going on with Mayweather. He's been boxing since he was a child. He's lived a largely sheltered life and remains in perpetual adolescence.

FIVE THINGS MAYWEATHER HAS DONE RIGHT

In the name of fairness, we'll acknowledge that Floyd Mayweather has done quite a few things right in his career. Here are some of his more notable accomplishments:

1. He's Created A Brilliant Style: He's economical, he makes no mistakes, and he knows exactly what he's doing at all times. He has more poise in the ring than any man in boxing today.

2. He's Undefeated: We don't usually pay much heed to undefeated records, for they are as much a product of smart matchmaking as anything else, but Mayweather's 41-0 record means a lot to him and his fans.

3. He's Shown Us That Fight Fans Are More Sophisticated Than They're Given Credit For Being: There's definitely a disconnect between the large number of people who couldn't care less if he ever fights again and the million or so who buy his fights on pay-per-view. A large segment of fandom seems content to watch Mayweather's cold boxing clinics.

4. He's Captured The African-American Audience: With a shortage of great black fighters working today, Mayweather gives a large market a reason to follow boxing.

5. He's Tapped Into The Reality TV Era: Mayweather was tailor-made for this age of trash TV and neon gaudiness. Time will tell if Mayweather really was the fighter of this era or merely a placeholder until the next big thing came along. Still, he manipulates the media as well as anybody.

—D.S.

FLOYD FANS
Mayweather has captured the African-American audience

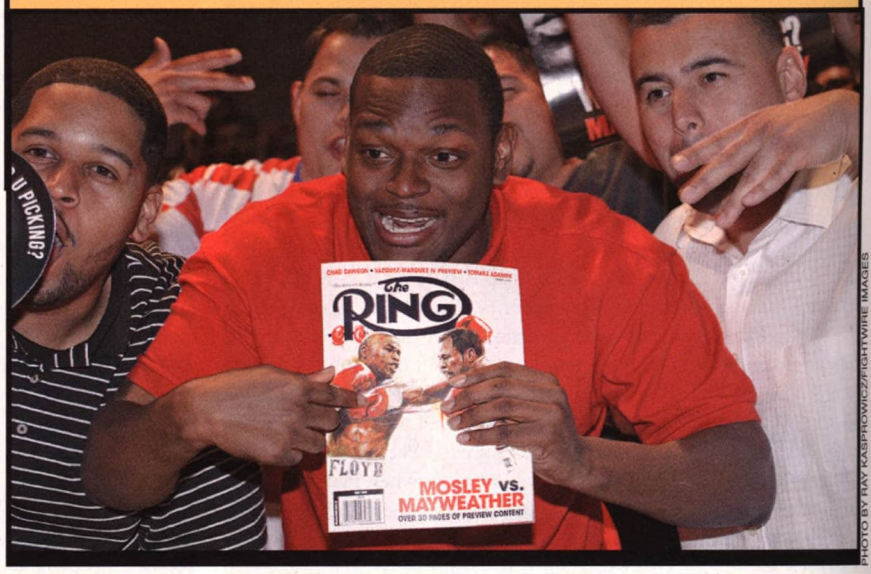
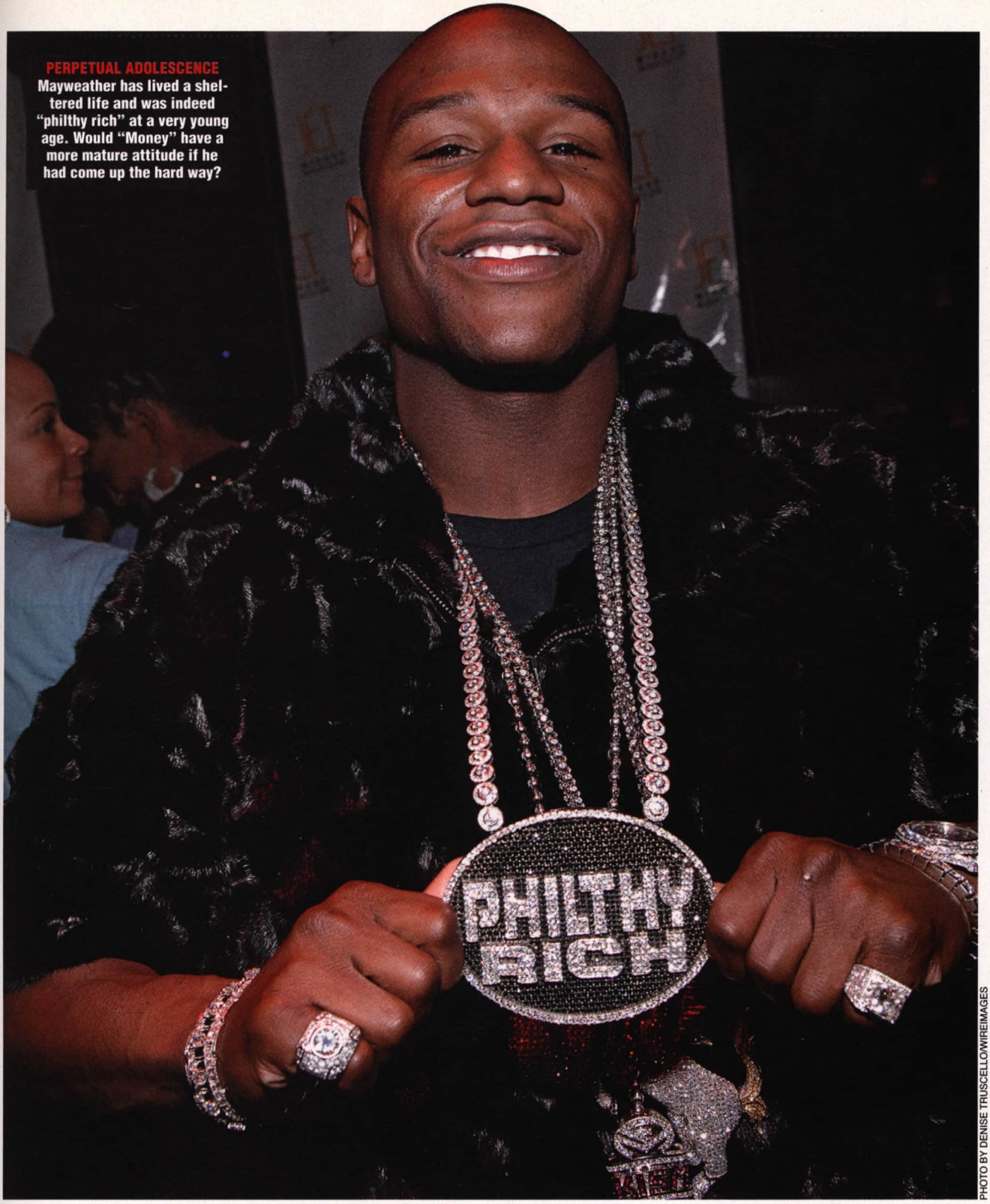


PHOTO BY RAY KASPRZYCKI/ZUMA PRESS/WIRE IMAGES

What If Things Were Different? We don't expect Mayweather to suddenly become, say, a congressman or to act as dour as Evander Holyfield, but it would be nice if he weren't such a hip-hop cartoon character at age 33. His detractors would have a lot less reason to dislike him, and boxing would have one less silly, clichéd personality to apologize for.

1. His Personal Life Began To Overshadow His Ring Accomplishments

His supporters argue that we shouldn't care about Mayweather's personal life, but, when we see footage of his children's mother being carried away on a gurney, allegedly because of



PERPETUAL ADOLESCENCE
Mayweather has lived a sheltered life and was indeed "philthy rich" at a very young age. Would "Money" have a more mature attitude if he had come up the hard way?

PHOTO BY DENISE TRUSCELLO/WIREIMAGES

Mayweather, we can only wonder how much more Mayweather can do before he hits the point of no return. That is, if he hasn't already.

What If Things Were Different? What he needs to do is get rid of the enablers that surround him and spend some time with a good anger management coach. For the price of a few bracelets, Mayweather might learn how to deal with his temper. Whether or not he gets out of his current jam, which involves a multitude of charges that have him facing up to 34 years in prison, he needs professional help.

We may never get a Floyd Mayweather who fights like Henry Armstrong. He is what he is: a defensive specialist. But we might settle for a Floyd Mayweather who acts decently.

After all, as amusing as it might be to read his Tweets from prison, we'd rather not see him behind bars. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

SHADOW OF A CHANCE?

Can Odlanier Solis End Vitali Klitschko's Reign?

By Eric Raskin

Are you a dreamer or are you a realist? If you're a dreamer, your heavyweight hopes include such outlandish talk as discovering the next Mike Tyson or Muhammad Ali, a young American big man with otherworldly charisma and talent. If you're a realist, your heavyweight hopes get progressively less grandiose every day, and all you're asking for now, in 2011, is to see a Klitschko brother in a competitive fight.

That's a long way from asking for a heavyweight savior to arrive. Maybe five years ago, you wished for such things, but now you'd settle for just one big fight that doesn't stink.

For the dreamers, the realists, and everyone in between, the hope is that such a fight arrives on March 19. That's when older brother Vitali is scheduled to defend his alphabet belt against mandatory challenger Odlanier Solis, the undefeated 2004 Olympic gold medalist from Cuba.

There's a misconception among fans of Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko that those people who don't categorize themselves as fans of the Ukrainian pillars of heavyweight dominance have a personal dislike for the brothers. But that's not the case at all. The fight fans in America and elsewhere who've lost interest in the heavyweight division don't hate the Klitschkos, two admirable, professional, hard-working, skillful champions. What they hate is the Klitschkos' fights. And while they place part of the blame on Wladimir and Vitali and their low-risk boxing styles, they also place a large portion of the blame on their opponents. Whether the challengers have been overmatched or undermotivated (or a little bit of both), one after another has entered the ring for the most important fight of his life and accepted defeat all too meekly.

The last time we saw a Klitschko in a real fight was 5½ years ago, when Wladimir had to get up from three knockdowns to outpoint a young, hungry Samuel Peter. Here's a flipbook view of what we've seen since: Wladimir obliterates Chris Byrd, Calvin Brock, Ray Austin, and Lamon Brewster; he decisions Sultan Ibragimov in one of the most boring heavyweight title fights ever staged; Wladimir kayos Tony

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY JOE KLAMAR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

GOLD IN GREECE

It's hard to believe the young man having his arm raised after beating Viktar Zuyev for a gold medal in the 2004 Olympics is the same guy who will be challenging Vitali. Solis has gained a lot of weight since then, which has raised concerns about his work ethic.

Thompson; Vitali returns from a four-year retirement to dominate Peter; Wlad destroys late sub Hasim Rahman; Vitali drubs Juan Carlos Gomez; Wladimir beats Ruslan Chagaev; Vitali takes out Chris Arreola and then outpoints a defensive Kevin Johnson; Wladimir ends 12 dreadful rounds against Eddie Chambers with an explosive last-second knockout; Vitali batters somebody named Albert Sosnowski; Wladimir gives Peter his third loss to a Klitschko; and Vitali lays a savage beating on dreadlocked heavybag Shannon Briggs.

That's 16 consecutive fights without drama, without two-way action, without the slightest doubt after a round or two regarding who would win the fight. And it's not as though none of those bouts were compelling on paper. Some gave Brock or Arreola a chance at victory, and Peter vs. a rusty Vitali seemed a toss-up to many observers. But whether the fights were reasonable on paper or not, not a single one was reasonable after

PHOTO BY BORIS STREUBAL/GETTY IMAGES FOR LAUREUS

CUT DOWN TO SIZE

It appears that Vitali Klitschko had a tougher time sparring with these kids than he's had with a lot of his opponents. Of course, boxing on his knees does eliminate the height advantage the WBC titleholder normally uses to excellent advantage.

the opening bell rang. Zero for 16. That's quite a dry spell.

It's up to Solis to prevent the streak from reaching 17.

The unfortunate reality is that if it hits 17, it's guaranteed to extend to 18 also, because Wladimir's plans to fight David Haye in the spring fell through and he's instead taking on Derek Chisora, a challenger so anonymous that even Sosnowski fans are questioning his credentials. It's not quite "now or never" in terms of someone giving the Klitschkos a tussle. But if not now, if not Solis, we inch one step closer to that unappetizing "never" possibility.

So what does Solis have going for him that might give him a chance against Klitschko, a man who has never trailed in a professional fight, never suffered a knockdown, and boasts the highest knockout percentage of any heavyweight titlist in history? "La Sombra" ("The Shadow") is nearly a decade younger, at age 30. He has that tremendous amateur pedigree that includes not only the Olympic gold but also two wins over Cuban legend Felix Savon when Solis was still a teenager and victories over future professional heavyweight titlists Haye and Ibragimov at the 2001 world championships.

Solis, 17-0 (12), throws just about every punch in the book effectively, his best weapon being a quick, sneaky overhand right. His defense is tight. He's relaxed in the ring, never wasting energy.

Even though Solis is relatively untested as a pro—the biggest names on his resume are a 38-year-old Monte Barrett and a 40-year-old Ray Austin—there are some observers who believe he can not only give Klitschko his toughest fight in many years but actually upset him and take his alphabet belt. ESPN boxing analyst Teddy Atlas has studied the Klitschkos closely while preparing contender Alexander Povetkin for an eventual title fight, and he believes Solis has a very realistic shot at scoring the victory.

"I think that Vitali gives you plenty of opportunities to have success with him," Atlas told THE RING. "He's got his hands down. He'll step back in a pretty predictable fashion. You have opportunities to step in and time him and to catch him in a vulnerable, exposed position as he pulls back with his hands low. Because of his amateur experience and what he's accomplished, Solis should have the confidence to recognize those opportunities in front of him. If he steps with Klitschko as he pulls back, that's a game plan that can lead to a win. If he steps with him, he will find the target."

SOLIS' "0" MIGHT HAVE TO GO

The Klitschko brothers have never been shy about handing other heavyweights their first pro defeats. In fact, combined, Vitali and Wladimir are 12-0 (8) against undefeated fighters (all five of their combined losses came against fighters who had been beaten at least once). Here's a look at the zeroes turned into ones by the Klitschkos:

Wladimir Klitschko

YEAR	OPPONENT	RECORD	RESULT
1998	Najee Shaheed	16-0-1	KO 1
1999	Zoran Vujecic	14-0	KO 1
2005	Eliseo Castillo	18-0-1	KO 4
2005	Samuel Peter	24-0	W 12
2006	Calvin Brock	29-0	KO 7
2008	Sultan Ibragimov	22-0-1	W 12
2009	Ruslan Chagaev	25-0-1	KO 9

Vitali Klitschko

YEAR	OPPONENT	RECORD	RESULT
1998	Alben Belinski	5-0	KO 2
1999	Ed Mahone	21-0-2	KO 3
2000	Timo Hoffman	22-0	W 12
2009	Chris Arreola	27-0	KO 10
2009	Kevin Johnson	22-0-1	W 12

STREAK SNAPPER
Vitali has beaten a number of undefeated fighters, including Chris Arreola

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNET/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

However, Atlas has one major hesitation that's holding him back from making the bold upset prediction, and it's the same characteristic that gives everyone pause the first time they see Solis. We all know that you don't have to have bulging biceps and six-pack abs to make it in boxing. But it's not exactly encouraging to see a guy who fought supremely well at 201 pounds as an amateur now routinely tipping the scales at 260 pounds or higher. Standing 6'1½", Solis is carrying at least 30 pounds of excess baggage. Sure, your frame naturally widens a bit as you grow older, but not this much. In the span of just a few years, Solis has gone from looking like a finely tuned athlete to looking like the Kool-Aid Man.

"Solis definitely has a chance to win, but I don't know the depth of his character. And the weight is what really makes me wonder about that," Atlas said. "If he has any depth of character in the ring, I think he wins the fight. I think the only way he doesn't win the fight is if he becomes satisfied to just go rounds. But if winning the title is the most important thing to him and has been for years, then he's going to win the title. I have no doubt about it. The opportunities for him to win this fight are abundant."

Atlas isn't the only one who thinks Solis has the skills to get the job done. Solis' most recent opponent, veteran gatekeeper Ray Austin, also believes La Sombra can win.

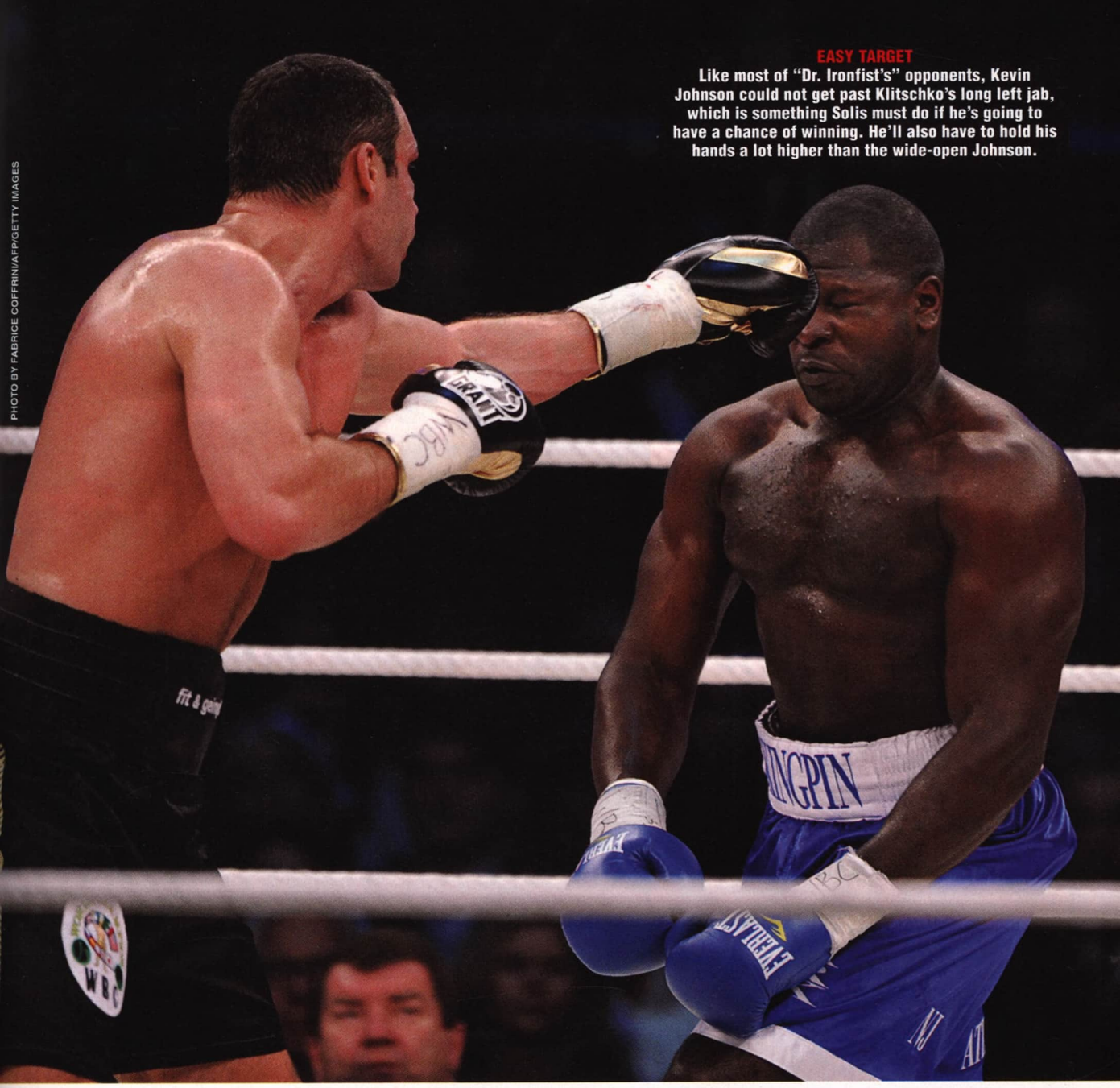
"Solis will beat Vitali Klitschko," Austin stated definitively in the ring after his defeat to Solis last December. "He's accurate and has a good defense. He rests and recovers well too … He showed a lot."

Not many people got to see what Solis showed, as his "title eliminator" with Austin from the American Airlines Arena in Miami, Florida, was only televised on the local Spanish-language channel Mega TV. What he showed was a sampling of both the pros and the cons in constructing a debate as to whether he can trouble Klitschko. He was quicker than the 6'6" Austin—as he should be against Vitali—and he put combinations together nicely for a heavyweight. One particular sustained flurry put Austin on the canvas with more than a minute to go in the fifth round, but Solis was unable to finish him. Through five rounds, Solis had been averaging about 50 punches thrown per round. But after that, his productivity dipped to just 37 punches per round.

Austin, though terribly inaccurate (the punch stats saw him landing at just a 13-percent clip over the course of the fight), was outworking Solis by throwing 84 punches per round, including a decent jab that was helping him pick up points on the judges' scorecards. Through nine rounds, judge Mike Ross had Solis ahead comfortably, 88-82, but Rocky Young had Austin on top, 86-84, while Ged O'Connor had the fight tied, 85-85. The cards became immaterial in the 10th, when Solis hurt Austin, and the Cleveland veteran repeatedly held to avoid going down. Referee Tommy Kimmons took a point from Austin for excessive holding, and, late in the round,

PHOTO BY MIKE EHRMANN/GETTY IMAGES

ROAD TO THE TITLE?
Solis rocks Ray Austin with a left hook en route to winning an alphabet eliminator to earn a shot at Vitali. Austin believes Solis will defeat Klitschko.



EASY TARGET
Like most of "Dr. Ironfist's" opponents, Kevin Johnson could not get past Klitschko's long left jab, which is something Solis must do if he's going to have a chance of winning. He'll also have to hold his hands a lot higher than the wide-open Johnson.

PHOTO BY FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

the fighters got locked in a clinch and nearly fell over the ropes and out of the ring. Once the fighters got untangled, the bell rang to end the 10th round and Austin landed a punch after the bell, which led Kimmons to disqualify him.

The consensus opinion was that a knockout win for Solis was coming soon, but Austin's manager, Dale Edwards, didn't see it that way and wasn't impressed with the Cuban.

"A fight of that magnitude, for them to stop it on a disqualification, it's not fair," Edwards said. "It wasn't flagrant. I'll say this: If that had been a Klitschko who threw that punch, they never would have disqualified him.

"From what I saw, Ray was winning the fight, he kept the boy at bay with his jab, and Ray's jab wasn't as stiff and powerful as Klitschko's. Now what happens when Klitschko goes in there and jabs him into oblivion?"

That's precisely the question that has the boxing public bracing for more of what we've been watching for the last five years: A Klitschko jabs, a challenger decides after one or two rounds that it's going to take a monumental effort to get past that jab, and the challenger becomes content to just see how many rounds he can last, hoping perhaps that the Klitschko in question will grow exhausted slapping him around. We've seen it over and over again, and say what you will about the weak crop of contenders the Klitschkos have had the privilege of feasting on since Lennox Lewis retired, but Wladimir and Vitali deserve some credit for so easily convincing nearly all of them to go into survival mode.

And neither Klitschko ever seems to have a letdown. "I know Solis is a very tough opponent, and I will not underestimate him," Vitali said when the fight was announced. There is no reason to expect Klitschko to take Solis lightly. And even though the elder brother is now 39, he has shown no evidence that he's slipping. Certainly, he hasn't been taking any punishment in the ring that should hasten his demise.

LARGE AND IN CHARGE

One of the hot topics entering the Klitschko-Solis fight is the challenger's weight. Over the course of his pro career, Solis has ranged from a low of 246¾ pounds up to a high of 271. In his last fight, he tipped the scales at 260. If he beats Klitschko, he'll rank somewhere in the top two or three on the list of heaviest fighters ever to win a major belt. Here's how that list currently looks, using the official weights for the fights in which these boxers won their titles (if they won titles on multiple occasions, we use the highest of those title-winning weights):

BOXER	WEIGHT
1. Nicolay Valuev	324
2. Primo Carnera	260½
3. Lennox Lewis	251
4. Samuel Peter	250¾
5. George Foreman	250
6. Frank Bruno	247¾
7. Vitali Klitschko	247
8. Wladimir Klitschko	241
9. John Ruiz	241
10. John Tate	240

PHOTO BY OLIVER LANG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

LARGEST OF THE LARGE
Nicolay Valuev weighed 324 pounds when he won the WBA strap

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

COMEBACK KAYO
Referee Arthur Mercante Jr. raises Vitali's arm after he scored a second-round knockout of Kirk Johnson at Madison Square Garden. It was Klitshko's first bout after losing to Lennox Lewis and the beginning of a nine-fight winning streak, which Solis will try to break.

So if you believe Solis is going to end the streak of lopsided letdowns and actually inject a little intrigue into a Klitschko fight, you have to be basing that belief on Solis actually being good enough to compete with the A-game of Vitali Klitschko.

Maybe La Sombra is that good. At the very least, he hasn't yet been exposed as a fraud. He's faced mediocre opposition for the most part in the pros, but the skilled amateur standout has done what's been expected of him and has won with little difficulty.

Against Klitschko, something very different is expected of Solis. He isn't supposed to win without difficulty. He really isn't supposed to win at all. If he does, then it injects energy into the heavyweight division and creates a must-see fight between Solis and Wladimir for THE RING championship. But most of the realists aren't aiming that high. They just want to see a memorable fight.

Fight fans shouldn't have to wait long to find out if they'll be getting one. Once the Klitschko-Solis fight is three minutes old, we'll have a good sense of whether even the realists have been caught dreaming. ■

POR LOS QUE SE ATREVEN A SUBIR AL RING

CON CARÁCTER

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THE MERCURIAL RISE OF JAMES DEGALE

From Boos To The British Title In Just Nine Fights

By Gavin Evans

James DeGale had Audley Harrison on his back when he turned professional two years ago—but it hasn't taken him long to shake off the big man.

His problem was that "Fraudly" won massive acclaim after winning the Olympic super heavyweight gold medal in the Sydney Olympics, only to fizzle into a much-ridiculed object of contempt when fighting for pay. DeGale was also a cocky southpaw gold medalist from London, so by the time he made his own much-heralded professional debut against Georgian middleweight Vepkhia Tchilaiain in February 2009, the fight crowd was already skeptical. And DeGale confirmed their suspicions when he boxed exclusively off the back foot—barely taking a punch for his troubles but landing only pitty-patty amateur taps in turn. A section of the Birmingham crowd erupted into hearty boos.

The rap against him after that bad night was that his hit-and-run style was not suited to the rigors of prize fighting. DeGale responded by declaring himself the "Marmite of boxing," a reference to the British sandwich spread. "People are either going to love me or hate me." In truth, he was so shaken by his reception that he instantly made adjustments that have earned him accolades from previously hostile pundits and fans.

"To come back as Olympic middleweight gold medalist and to be noticed by the country was great, but then boxing in your professional debut with a small minority of the crowd booing, well, of course it was upsetting," he admits. "But I'm a strong-minded boy, and I went back to the gym. And you can see the results: the last eight performances since then have been spot-on."

His trainer, former European featherweight champion Jim McDonnell, went to work teaching his elusive protégé how to plant his feet, and the transition was remarkable. "A lot of people think of Jim as just a fitness fanatic, but he's also one of the best boxing coaches in the world. He got me working on drills to develop my power—like turning my hips when I punch and turning my wrists, as well as different defensive techniques—like tucking up, Winky Wright-style. I had a style that worked in the amateurs, so I had to start from the bottom. Fortunately, I'm a fast learner."

DeGale's promoter, Frank Warren, has been accused of over-protecting his stars, but he had enough confidence in this $2.3-million investment to put him on the fast track. His nine opponents have had a combined record of 110-41-1, but he blew them all away with contemptuous ease.

Still, there were surprised murmurs when it was announced that number nine was the 29-1 (15) Paul Smith, for the British super middleweight title, in Smith's hometown of Liverpool in December. DeGale had a mere 21 rounds to his name, and several old hands predicted Smith would be too hard, strong, and experienced, and that the 12-round distance would be too much for a man who had never gone beyond five.

Once again the 24-year-old novice arrived to a ripple of boos, but he believed he had the conditioning and the skill to handle a world-rated 28-year-old. "I knew I could do 12 with ease because of the training I was doing with Jim," he recalled. "For example, we do lots of interval work on the track. We had one session where I did 10 times 400 meters, and I did them all in between 71 and 75 seconds.

"But it was not just fitness. I'd watched Smith throughout his career—I was good friends with his younger brother Steven—so I knew exactly what I was up against, and I'd been sparring with Nathan Cleverly (the world-rated light-heavyweight) and Tony Bellew (Commonwealth light-heavyweight champion) and held my own against both. I was just so confident."

What emerged from the combination of 101 amateur fights (85 wins) and 23 months of McDonnell's tuition was a surprisingly mature switch-hitting style—perfect balance, purposeful footwork, head well tucked in, lots of upper body movement, and a blistering array of accurate head and

PHOTO BY DEAN MOUHTAROPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES
CLETO REYES
HECHO EN MÉXICO

bodyblows. Although not a devastating puncher at the elite level, he has extremely quick hands, naturally sharp reflexes, and impeccable timing.

He put all this together to win every minute of every round before stopping Smith in the ninth. With each round, he cranked up his attack, often standing in the zone to punch it out with the British champion, blocking and slipping the return fire. In the ninth, he really opened up and wobbled the tungsten-chinned Smith, which forced referee Howard Foster to stop it at the 2:08 mark.

In nine fights, DeGale had proved that, unlike Audley Harrison, he knew how to build on an amateur career that began at the age of nine when his father sent him to the nearby boxing gym in Harlesden, London.

"I was naughty at school, so he sent me there to get my frustration out and to get some discipline in me," he recalled. "I remember my first spar against an Irish kid who'd had 10 fights, and I got my head punched in. But I didn't mind it. I just knew it was for me."

At that stage, DeGale was a chubby fellow who was called "Chunky" by his mates—a moniker that stuck, although it hardly fits his current lean fighting physique (he stands over 6'). He won his first youth title aged 16 at 178-pounds, but slimmed down as a senior, although he blows up between fights.

"I get an extra layer out of training and I go up to 190-pounds. But it only takes a couple of weeks before I'm back to 176. I'm so comfortable at super middle, and I could make middleweight with enough notice. In fact, I'd consider that if I was offered a world title shot at 160."

His first major international success came at 20 when he won the bronze medal at the Commonwealth Games. The following year, he lost in the opening round of the World Amateur championships but twice won British titles (ABA) and represented his country at numerous international tournaments.

One of his rivals was his club mate at Dale Youth Club, George Groves. They fought in 2006, and, after four tight rounds, the 18-year-old Groves got a majority decision, which riled DeGale. "I used to beat him up in sparring, so maybe I took it a bit easy, but I completely outboxed him. I was hitting him and making him miss. I've been abroad, and I've been robbed—that's how amateur boxing is. But I was gutted to lose that decision." (Incidentally, the YouTube video shows a close and competitive fight with DeGale probably deserving the nod.)

Groves went on to win the ABA title that year and the next, but it was DeGale who got picked for the Olympics, although few expected him to come away with anything.

His draw was the toughest imaginable, starting with Egypt's world bronze medalist, Mohamed Hikal (a 13-4 victory), followed by the highly rated American, Shawn Estrada, (11-5). Next came Kazaskhstan's 2004 Olympic gold medalist, Bakhtiyar Artayev (8-3), taking the Englishman into the semi-finals against Ireland's Darren Sutherland, who'd beaten him in four of their previous five fights.

"Obviously I thought, *Ah, no, I've got him again*. All of our previous fights were very close, but, in those, I was fighting his game—standing in the center of the ring. I knew it was going to be hard, but I was confident of winning if I could stick to the tactics given to me by our coach, Terry Edwards, which was to hit and move and

RIDING HIGH
James DeGale enjoyed the attention of winning an Olympic gold medal, but it also came with the stigma attached from the stench left by former Olympic super heavyweight gold medalist Audley Harrison. "Chunky" wanted to prove he's no "Fraudly."

PHOTO BY CATHAL MCNAUGHTON/POOL/GETTY IMAGES

keep a tight guard. And I won easily—10-3. The movement was too much for him."

The pair seemed set to resume their rivalry as professionals, but, a year later, Sutherland, suffering from clinical depression, committed suicide by hanging himself.

"I was shocked and really upset when I heard about it," said DeGale. "We'd always had a very healthy rivalry—competitive but healthy."

In the Olympic finals, he faced Cuba's Emelio Correa (who'd won gold at the 2007 PanAm Games by knocking out Shawn Porter). Correa had twice beaten DeGale (in 2005 and 2007), but, by the end of the first round, the Englishman was 5-1 up. After that, the Cuban tried to rough him up and even bit him, earning a two-point penalty that proved crucial because DeGale ended up winning 16-14.

He believes that in 18 month's time he could top that gold medal by winning his first professional world title, but first he has local business to take care of: George Groves now holds the Commonwealth title and is 11-0 (9).

DeGale comes across as friendly and engaging, but, when the conversation turns to Groves, he struggles to contain the bile. He admits he hates Groves, whom he calls "that

ugly ginger kid"—an odd description, because although Groves is a redhead (and British redheads have a hard time), he is reasonably good-looking. The British champion clearly resents the fact that the Commonwealth champion is routinely dubbed "the man who beat DeGale as an amateur."

"He's lived in my shadow half his life, so obviously he's a bit jealous and bitter, and he's living off my name," said DeGale.

In 2010 Frank Warren, and Groves' promoter, Hayemaker, each made offers that were dismissed, although it appears more likely to take place in 2011.

In his last fight, Groves got off the floor to stop the previously unbeaten Scotsman Kenny Anderson in six, and DeGale was shouting for his rival. "I was screaming, 'George, hold, hold, no, put your guard up, come on!' because I didn't want anyone else to knock him out. I want to knock him out—if he mans up and fights me. If I hit Groves, he will not get up like that. I'll knock him out within four rounds."

After that, DeGale wants the European title (currently held by the Irishman Brian

NOVICE CHAMP

Despite a scant 21 pro rounds under his belt, DeGale took a big step early in his career by challenging British super middleweight champion Paul Smith. The results proved quite favorable for southpaw DeGale, pictured blasting Smith against the ropes (top). DeGale was in total control when referee Howard Foster stopped the fight at 2:08 of the ninth (bottom).

PHOTOS BY DEAN MOUNTAROPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES

HORTON HAMMERED

British promoter Frank Warren, noted for babying his rising stars, threw DeGale in tough. In just his seventh pro fight, DeGale stepped up against 15-1 Sam Horton, stopping his foe in the fifth round of his first scheduled 12-rounder.

PHOTO BY LEON NEAL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

CLAIMING GOLD

DeGale wasn't expected to reach the Olympic finals, let alone win a gold medal, but he shocked everyone by upsetting Cuban Emelio Correa, 16-14, thanks in part to Correa being assessed a two-point penalty for biting DeGale.

PHOTO BY ANTHONY DEVLIN/WPA-POOL/GETTY IMAGES

MEDAL WINNER

DeGale proudly displays his Order of the British Empire medal at Buckingham Palace in March 2009. Just nine fights into his pro career, DeGale is putting some distance between himself and that other gold medalist from the Sydney Games.

Magee) and then a "big-name" US-based fighter (he mentions Kelly Pavlik and Edison Miranda) before challenging for a version of the world title.

"I know you shouldn't run before you walk, but, if I had my way, I'd box for a world title in 2011. Still, give me 18 months, after the Super Six is over, and I see myself fighting Carl Froch in what would be a massive fight in Britain if I keep on performing the way I am. It would be a fantastic fight."

Unlike so many boxers, he has few serious distractions outside the ring—unmarried, with no children, and still extremely close to his parents, Diane and Leroy. He recently bought his own apartment in Harlesden, London, a few blocks from his parents, "but I'm hardly there because I get looked after too much by my mum."

Chunky is handsome and articulate with an engaging personality—somehow managing to come across as cocky and polite at the same time. If he keeps on winning in style, he could well be the next British boxer with crossover pulling power.

His aim is to "become undisputed world champion and to be known as one of Britain's best-ever fighters—if not *the best*," and, once that happens, he might contemplate retirement. "By about 32, I could be out of the game; a millionaire with all the accolades and world titles."

He smiles and quickly rows back from that assertion. On the one hand, he knows that in less than two years he's achieved what Audley Harrison failed to do in a decade, but he's under no illusion that he has already arrived.

"I can't really talk about how many years I have left. I'm a fighter, that's what I do, and boxing is in my blood. I still have a long, long way to go." ■

Gavin Evans is a London-based freelancer and a regular contributor to THE RING.

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"I Have A Lot Bottled Up Inside"

Abner Mares still wears the angelic look of a teenaged choirboy. He's 25, married, and the proud father of a little girl, though he still looks like a 16-year-old kid working his way up through the amateur ranks.

That's the mistake people make. They get sucked in by the veneer. Until you peel away a few layers to find out what's really inside, you can never know what drives the bantamweight contender. He fights like a demon in the ring, and, to some extent, he's punching a few apparitions that will always haunt him.

Many fighters have the proverbial raw back-story. The difference with Mares, 21-0-1 (13), is that his reaches extremes even the most hardcore boxing back-story seldom touches. Try sifting through garbage for dinner or going days without knowing whether or not you'll even eat. That's the way Mares lived a part of his childhood.

As for the other parts, you can say Mares is the pint-sized version of Bernard Hopkins, in the sense of leading a troubled teenaged life and making a complete turnaround as an adult—using boxing as his way out.

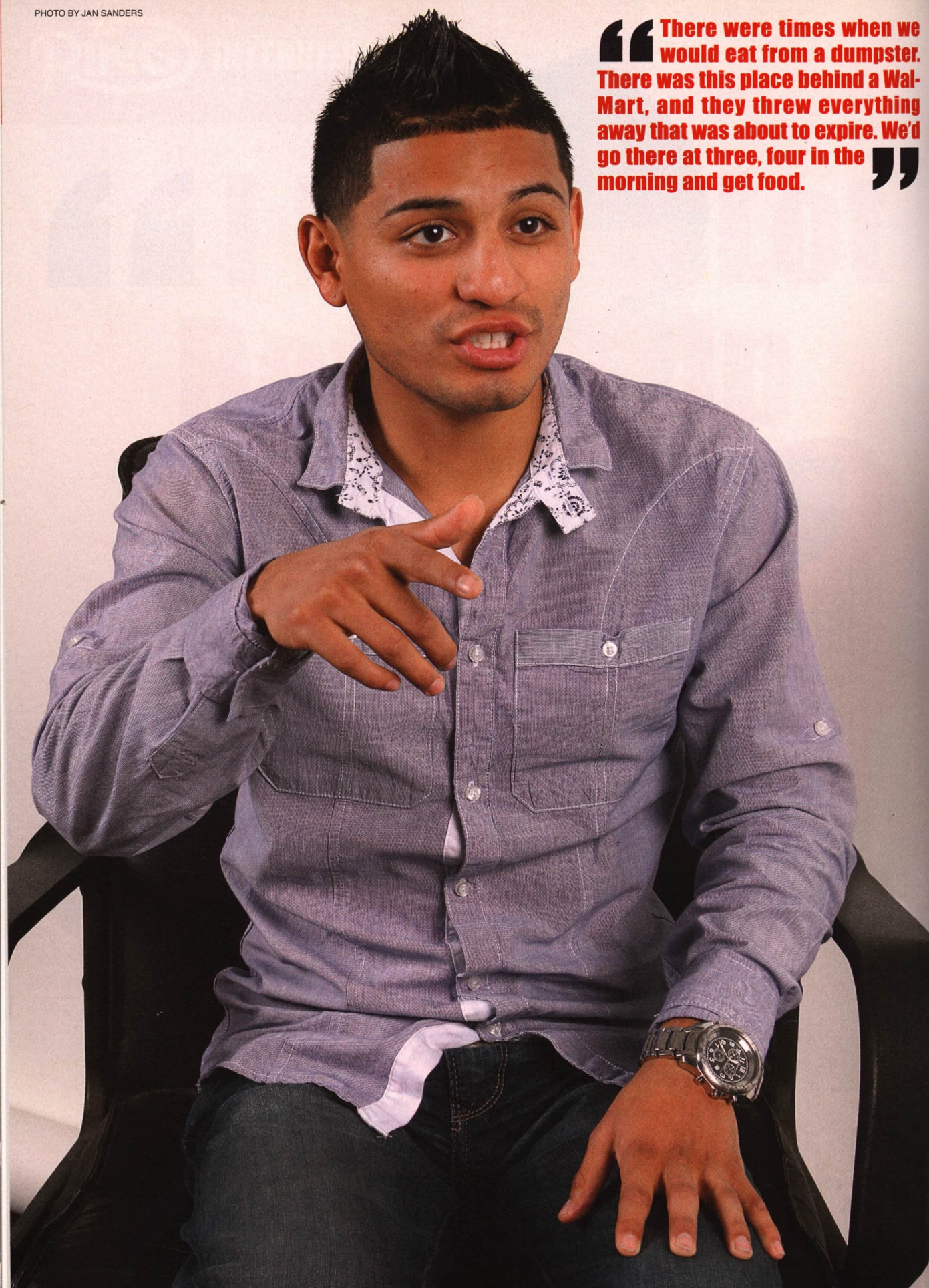
RING Managing Editor Joseph Santoliquito spoke with Mares a month after he beat Vic Darchinyan to advance in Showtime's bantamweight tournament to meet Joseph Agbeko in the finals. The date set for the Agbeko fight is April 23 at the Nokia Theatre in Los Angeles, California.

Mares had just arrived back from vacationing in Mexico over the holiday. He was very open about his past and touched on a variety of subjects. Santoliquito reports:

"I thought I knew Abner, or at least I thought I knew a lot about him and his past. Apparently, I didn't. From what he reveals in this interview, Abner does make you believe miracles can happen. He went from an angry young man to someone who literally gave another boxer the shoes off his feet."

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS



"There were times when we would eat from a dumpster. There was this place behind a Wal-Mart, and they threw everything away that was about to expire. We'd go there at three, four in the morning and get food."

The Ring: What are some of the things you remember most about your youth?

Abner Mares: First of all, I remember my mother and father having their troubles back in Mexico when I was a kid. That led to my mom moving to the United States by herself, with all of us kids being dragged along. There were seven of us. I was six years old.

The Ring: Why did the whole family have to move?

AM: It got really bad between my parents. They argued, and there were things I saw that I'd like to forget. I think my mom just got fed up with it all. I was too young to know why my mom made the move. I'm guessing that they had their differences. They were arguing a lot, but I also remember having a good childhood in Mexico. My father made a good living. He used to sell things like watches and stuff. I was six, and the youngest was my sister Sarah, who was three-months old at the time.

My mom came to the United States without my father finding out. I still remember that day. She fed my dad, and my dad called me in to massage his feet. He knocked out and went to sleep. It's when my mother started taking our luggage to the roof. I knew it was happening, but I didn't know why. It wasn't planned at all. I was watching my world change right in front of me. My older brother, Ismael Jr., grabbed my hand and said, "Let's go." I remember my mom telling us we were going to Tijuana. We took a bus. My mom just grabbed a few things for us, seven of us ranging in age from 11 years old to three-months old. We left late in the afternoon. There was a neighbor helping us. But once we got to the bus station, I remember we didn't have any money. For my mother to make money, she had to hustle and sell stuff. She took a good 20 of the watches my father sold, and we were selling watches at the bus station.

The Ring: Were you living at the bus station?

AM: Yeah, for maybe a day or two. I remember the smell of the restroom. It was really bad—not a good place to be. I was just a kid, and I didn't know what the heck was going on. I thought we were going on a trip.

The Ring: When did the reality hit about what was happening?

AM: That came when we finally got on the bus. I was asleep and remember having a dream of my dad and waking up crying for him. We were on the bus, and I'm crying, and someone else is crying, and my mother was going crazy. I still didn't know what was going on. My mother had a relative that lived in Tijuana, so when we got to Tijuana, we had no money again. We were living with relatives. I remember the cab driver being really nice to us from the bus station to my relative's house. There were eight of us piled into this cab, and I was scared traveling on nothing but dirt roads. I had no idea where we were going. We got to a house in Tijuana, and we were there for about a week. I remember crying to my mother's relatives, and my mom kept telling us that we were going on a vacation. That's what she called it.

The Ring: Was there anything positive?

AM: One thing. It was my birthday around the time we left, and my mother still didn't have any money. She bought me a paleta payaso (clown lollipop). I turned seven and my brother got a Twinkie for his birthday *(laughs)*. That was my gift. We were really happy with our gifts. From there, we went from Tijuana to Los Angeles.

The Ring: How did you get into the United States?

AM: This is where the trip really begins. We crossed illegally in my aunt's car. Back then, it was a lot easier. The US border patrol would ask us if we were American citizens, and we'd say, "Yes." My aunt made three trips to get us all over the border. One day there was three of us, another day there was a few more. I remember my aunt telling us to pretend we were asleep in the car and that she would do all of the talking. But me, being I don't know what *(laughs)*, I had to be awake *(laughs)*.

I remember the border cop flashing the flashlight into the car and he saw that I was up. He asked me something and I told him the name my aunt gave me to say, "Richard," because we had the birth certificates of our cousins living in the States. I remember my aunt being really angry with me because I didn't listen *(laughs)*. I never listened *(laughs)*.

The Ring: That was you as a kid—the hardhead?

AM: Oh yeah, I was a little crazy *(laughs)*. I wouldn't listen. I was hardheaded. I did what I wanted to do. I wasn't a bad kid. I was just hyper and hardheaded. I wouldn't listen to anyone. I was a little troublemaker, a tattletale—always telling on my brothers *(laughs)*. I got more than a few poundings from my older brothers *(laughs)* over it. But we did get to the United States, and we got to a two-bedroom apartment there with my mother's brothers, who I never met before we made the move. I think once I got to the United States I wasn't afraid anymore. My uncle cleared out this one room for all of us—all eight—and we slept on the floor.

The Ring: Was it a whole new world for you?

AM: My mom right away started looking for a job when we got to the United States, then she got lost in Disneyland *(laughs)*, and I remember all of us crying because she got lost. She didn't know how she ended up in Disneyland *(laughs)*, which was an hour away in Anaheim. It got serious for us when she didn't know how to get around and she was crying on the phone talking to my aunt, getting directions back. She didn't understand the language and she didn't get back until really, really late. We all waited up for her, and it was kind of like a movie. When she got home, we all came rushing out of the house and met her in the middle of the street, all of us hugging her and crying.

In a week, my life turned upside down.

The Ring: Where was dad?

AM: My mom kept telling us that he was coming. A month went by, he wasn't there. I remember talking to him on the phone for two years. I stopped crying about him not being there—and then my mother enrolled me into the second grade.

So here I am, this new kid from a different country and not understanding English. We were all the same, my brothers and sisters. We started going to American school, and we didn't understand a word of English *(laughs)*. My older brothers would get picked on because they didn't understand the language, and they'd come home crying. I didn't have any of that. I picked up English really quick.

The Ring: Were there days that you went without eating?

AM: There were a lot of days like that. We wouldn't see my mother for days, and, when she came home from work, it was really late, and we were already asleep. The woman had two jobs at the time. She was cleaning houses and she worked at a warehouse. My mom was able to get a few dollars and got us a small, one-room apartment for all of us. We shared everything. The landlord would come by to collect the rent, and my mother would tell him we were all cousins just visiting *(laughs)*.

But it got bad. There were times when we would eat from a dumpster. There was this place behind a Wal-Mart, and they threw everything away that was about to expire. We'd go there at three, four in the morning and get food.

The Ring: How long did you live like that?

AM: I'd say we did that for a few years—until my brother got sick from drinking bad milk. At the time, I was around eight, nine years old. You don't think about it. You're eating from a dumpster, and you don't have money to buy food. All you know is that you're hungry and you'd eat anything. I didn't feel

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

"I started hanging out with the wrong crowd, and I had my own little crew. I was an angry kid, and there was a lot of fighting. Someone would talk bad to me, and I would just punch him. I was a troublemaker."

anything. I was happy going there because I was a kid and there was a lot of junk food in there *(laughs)*. My stomach was killing me all of the time. I was just hungry, and I didn't care.

The Ring: Were you embarrassed to reach those depths?

AM: You know I think back on those times. I could have been embarrassed about it, but I'm not embarrassed about it at all. I'm actually happy about the way I was brought up and who I became. There were embarrassing times, yes, when I'd get picked on for having Payless shoes *(laughs)*. I remember being sad—being a kid who didn't have good clothes, my hair was nasty. My mother was our barber *(laughs)*. But you do feel like people are staring at you all of the time—you felt different, out of place, uncomfortable.

The Ring: How did you deal with it?

AM: The wrong way. I started hanging out with the wrong crowd, and I had my own little crew. I was an angry kid, and there was a lot of fighting. Someone would talk bad to me, and I would just punch him. I was a troublemaker. I was Abner pushing a teacher, and I was the Abner punching kids. It's funny the person I am today and *that kid*. It is like a different person, but that Abner was still me.

I was in sixth grade and I was bad. I had my little crew. There were five, six of us punking people. I turned really bad. I remember burning a restroom in sixth grade. I remember lighting up toilet paper and we'd put toilet paper inside trash cans and light that on fire too.

The Ring: How would you treat other kids?

AM: I would punch them *(laughs)*. I shouldn't laugh at that, but that's the way I reacted to things. I didn't think. I was already stealing. I remember these things back then called talkback toys that I'd shoplift, and then we would sell the things we stole.

My mother was still working two jobs at the time, and she'd get calls about me. My father and mother reconciled, and my father came to live with us later. My mother would smack me now and then *(laughs)*, but my father still hadn't moved up and there was really no man in the house at the time.

I was by far the worst out of all my brothers and sisters. I was starting to hang out with gang members, and I began breaking into houses. I was 10, 11 years old, and there was no adult around. I did what I wanted to do. I was hanging out all day and would not get home until late that night or until the next morning.

I took a lot of chances. I was 12 years old having sex, unprotected sex. My mother even caught me one time having sex *(laughs)*. I didn't come home one night, and my brother told on me. My mom saw my bike outside this house and she poked her head into this window and saw I was about to have sex with this girl. I got my butt whipped *(laughs)*. I didn't care about anything then.

It's funny and it's sad, because I remember my younger brother, Adam, who looked up to me seeing the way I grew up.

The Ring: What happened to Adam?

AM: That's the twist. Look where I am and how he wound up doing four years for grand theft auto. He's getting out in July. He jumped into the barrio, and I didn't. But Adam was such a good kid growing up. I was the evil one *(laughs)*.

The Ring: How deep were you involved in the gang culture growing up in Hawaiian Gardens, California?

AM: I was in pretty deep. The gang culture is like anything else. It's about being out in the streets and knowing the people—putting in the work, your time. Older gang members tell you to go do something, you go do it. They'd tell me to go steal cars and I would go out and do it. I was asked to do some serious things—they'd tell me to do drive-bys. I didn't do them. But I wasn't going to school. I was doing home study because I got kicked out of high school for not showing up. I wasn't turning in homework and got too caught up with everything.

The Ring: What changed that?

AM: There was one day I knew there was going to be this rumble, blacks against the Mexicans, and my friends picked me up in front of my house. I remember Adam running after me asking me where I was going.

Remember the scene from *A Bronx Tale*, with the kid in the car and all of that stuff. It was like that. My friends had guns, knives, bats, but the word spread too much about the rumble and where it would be.

We were driving by the high school and we saw all these cops. My friend driving decided to get out of there. It was too late. The cops saw us and chased us down. We got pulled over and searched. They pulled us out of the car and spread us out. But me, thinking I was untouchable, I spit at the cop. It didn't go too well for me after that *(laughs)*.

The Ring: What happened?

AM: The cop beat me up pretty bad. He smashed my head up against the car and split my lip. I deserved it *(laughs)*. The strange thing is this cop drove me around

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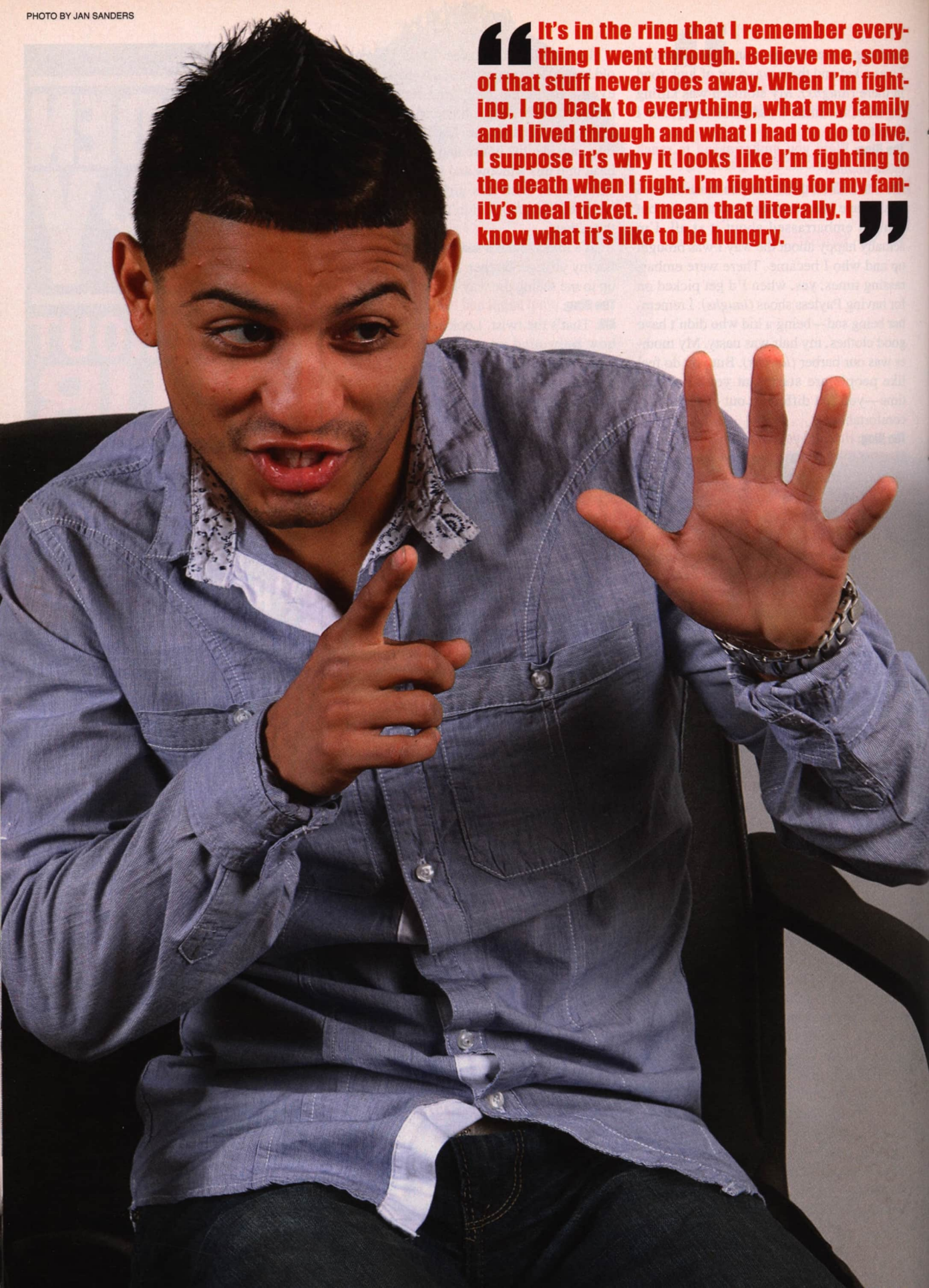

"It's in the ring that I remember everything I went through. Believe me, some of that stuff never goes away. When I'm fighting, I go back to everything, what my family and I lived through and what I had to do to live. I suppose it's why it looks like I'm fighting to the death when I fight. I'm fighting for my family's meal ticket. I mean that literally. I know what it's like to be hungry."

for a while, and he was really angry with me. I remember he was talking and saying what he was going to do to me. I had this smirk on my face, like "What are you going to do."

Finally, the cop drives to my house. He went inside and left me in the car in handcuffs. There were people in the neighborhood passing by who knew me, and I'm sitting there in the back of a cop car in handcuffs. I was embarrassed. It started to sink in that I better change.

What really did it was when the cop took me in my house in handcuffs and my mom looked at me and she dropped to the floor crying. Everyone was crying—I'm bleeding and in handcuffs. The cop sat us down and told my mother what happened. It was hard to see my mom and my sister Ester crying like that. My father came back—and, oh yeah, there was a beating that night *(laughs)*. That changed a lot of things for me, that one day. I didn't want to see my mother go through that pain. I knew what was right and wrong. I'd never been in jail—but I thought I was headed there that day. That changed a lot of things.

The Ring: How much of your past do you think shaped the fighter that you are today?

AM: I guess you can say I have a lot bottled up inside. People that know me say that I'm two totally different people: one inside the ring and another outside the ring. It's in the ring that I remember everything I went through. Believe me, some of that stuff never goes away. When I'm fighting, I go back to everything, what my family and I lived through and what I had to do to live. I suppose it's why it looks like I'm fighting to the death when I fight. I'm fighting for my family's meal ticket. I mean that *literally*. I know what it's like to be hungry.

The Ring: Were you a street fighter as a child?

AM: I never lost *(laughs)*. Once, you can say, there was a tie *(laughs)*. I was fighting into my teens on the streets. There might be someone from a different crew or someone looked at my girl inappropriately, and I'd fight them. I wanted to fight every day. I was hyped, and everyone was afraid of me already because they knew that I was boxing. I wasn't a bully. I'd fight anyone; it didn't matter.

The Ring: Do you look back on those times and wonder how you survived?

AM: I do all of the time. I wonder how I am where I am now and how my brother Adam wound up the way he did. It's hard. I consider myself lucky to be alive today. A lot of friends of mine that I grew up with are dead. One guy I knew, who I was close to, took his own life before the Christmas holiday. What's even sadder is that he left nothing for his three kids. I used to run the streets with the guy. Some guys I knew are doing 25-to-life for murder, attempted murder, robbery.

If I had a son, there's no way he would do anything I did. But if I could go through time, how crazy it might sound, I wouldn't change anything. What I experienced and went through made me who I am today. I do have to say this: If my daughter brought someone like me home, I wouldn't let him in the house *(laughs)*.

The Ring: How were you introduced to boxing?

AM: My older brother Ismael was already boxing since we lived in Mexico. When we got to the states, with my mother working two jobs, there was no babysitter, so Ismael would have to take two or three of us to the gym with him *(laughs)*. I never paid any attention until one day there was this trainer, Manuel Nava, who put the gloves on me and told me to box some other little kid. I was 11 and I remember dropping the kid and giving him a bloody nose. And I remember liking it. There was another kid who was wearing cowboy boots, and I dropped him too *(laughs)*. The father of the kid brought him back saying he slipped on the cowboy boots, and I knocked him down again *(laughs)*. I was knocking kids out.

My first amateur fight came when I was 11. I was really nervous, more so because my dad was there. My dad took the boxing part too serious. He wanted perfection, even though I was 11. I came home one day with a black eye from a street fight—that I won—and he was really mad at me for getting a black eye *(laughs)*. I had this fear that if I lost a fight, my dad would get mad at me. That was powerful motivation.

The Ring: Let's talk about your Olympic experience. It wasn't the most positive, was it?

AM: Not really. I was winning the amateur tournaments, but I couldn't advance anywhere because I didn't have any paperwork as an American citizen. Mike Vital hooked me up with the Mexican national team through an uncle of Mike's. The problem with that was they sent me to Mexico City by myself when I was around 16.

It was a great move in one sense because I got be away from the gang life and Hawaiian Gardens. The funny thing is I didn't want to go *(laughs)*. I was already living the life, and it was again a new change for me. I didn't want to be separated from my family and my brothers and sisters. To this day, my mother says she regrets the move to Mexico because she missed me growing up. I didn't have any papers to go back to the States, and, from 16 to 19, I didn't see my mother or my family for three years.

The Ring: But if you don't make that sacrifice, there is no Olympics.

AM: I know, I know. Everything seemed to be going well. I was winning international tournaments and I got to see a lot of places in the world—all because of my boxing. But the Olympic experience left a really bad taste—it was ugly. I represented Mexico and I was naturally very proud of that. My first-round fight [at bantamweight] came against Hungary's Zsolt Bedák. I lost [on points, 27-24, in a highly controversial decision].

They wouldn't count the bodyshots. I really didn't know what I had to do. They just wouldn't count the bodyshots *(some anger in his voice)*. Anyway, my fight became famous in Mexico because Julio Cesar Chavez called the fight, and he grew so angry over the decision that he cursed on national TV about it.

Afterward, I was happy Chavez and Ricardo Lopez came up to me and told me they thought I won. That was nice to hear, but it didn't help me. I wanted to advance and show people what I could do. I could have won a medal, but you never know. It wasn't Bedák's fault. He even came up to me after the fight and said that he thought I won, and he pretty much said he was sorry for what happened. I told him it wasn't him. It was the system.

The Ring: How depressing was that Olympics loss?

AM: It was pretty bad. I was thinking about giving up boxing because of it. It didn't hit me that fast because everyone would come up to me and console me that they thought I won the fight. Afterward, being in the room by myself, I wasn't advancing and everything I worked for and everything I sacrificed was for nothing. That's what I thought. I was sad but glad that everything was over, in a sense, because I was glad I could go home and see my family.

I got robbed. I have no problems saying it. It just hurt to give up my family for three years and get robbed like that. But there was one really good thing that came because of it.

The Ring: What was that?

AM: Losing in the Olympics led to me signing with Oscar De La Hoya *(laughs)*. Oscar was telling me that he was watching my fight live with his wife, and his wife told him when I was being interviewed, "Poor kid, Oscar, you should help this kid out and sign him." That's what Oscar told me when

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

"Losing in the Olympics led to me signing with Oscar De La Hoya *(laughs)*. Oscar was telling me that he was watching my fight live with his wife, and his wife told him when I was being interviewed, 'Poor kid, Oscar, you should help this kid out and sign him.' That's what Oscar told me when he talked about signing me."

he talked about signing me. Top Rank was in the mix. Shelly Finkel was in there too.

By the way, there was more big news that came from my Mexico experience. I got married, and my family didn't know I was married until after I got back from the Olympics *(laughs)*. My mom was sad that I married my wife, Natalie, and that she wasn't there for the wedding. My father was really angry that women and boxing don't mix *(laughs)*. When I finally introduced Natalie to my family, they weren't mean, but they weren't exactly the nicest at first, either *(laughs)*. That's over; they get along great now.

The Ring: After signing your first pro contract, what did you do with the money from your first paycheck?

AM: I remember giving money to my mom right away. I remember buying Ismael a car. I don't remember getting myself anything though *(laughs)*. That was it. I didn't go crazy. My mother did everything for me, and I had to do something for her. And my dad was there for me too. My older brother got me into boxing—getting him the car was a way to thank him.

The Ring: Does your family still travel en masse to your fights, and, if so, is it distracting?

AM: There are around 10 of my family that go to my fights. It was really hard when my brother Adam got sentenced because he was with me all of the time. I blamed myself for him ending up like that. Adam saw me grow up the way I did in the States. I didn't give him the opportunity to show what he could do. I feel guilty. I don't know why, but I do. I have plans for him when he gets out. He wants me to be his manager and help his boxing career. I'll tell you this—he's better than me *(laughs)*. Adam went down the same path as me, but, when I changed my life, Adam kept going. My brother Abasai is also turning pro in Mexico.

My family does really well with my career. No one tries to interfere, and they don't try to bug me for tickets.

The Ring: How has married life changed you?

AM: It's changed everything. I was this kid in Mexico who left his mother and family back in the United States. I was 18, living by myself in Mexico City. The Mexican boxing commission hired Natalie. I would see her every time I would go to the office and pick up something. I tended to go to the office more when she was there *(laughs)*. I asked her if I could walk her to the bus that she'd take to go home. I asked to go to the movies after that. We started going out. Natalie is a year older than me. We knew each other a year, and I asked her to marry me. I was really young. But sometimes, you just know *(laughs)*. I knew she was the one for me.

The Ring: How has being a father changed you?

AM: That's been great. I love it. I love everything about being with my daughter, Emily Angela. I hug her before she goes to school every day, and she waits for me coming back from work every day. I spoil her too much. Natalie gets on me about spoiling her *(laughs)*. Emily knows she can get away with a lot from me. With her mother, not so much *(laughs)*.

My daughter's education, her life, is in my hands and my fists. For me to make something more out of boxing can provide for a better life than I have. I still provide for my whole family. I do it because I want to. I always make sure I give my mother some money. My mother watches the fights, but it's too hard for her. She gets too nervous. My dad still goes crazy when I fight *(laughs)*. I still hear his voice when I fight, but my father gives me my space.

It's all for Emily and Natalie. I tell my wife all of the time that Emily won't date anyone until she's 30 *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Will you tell her about how rough you had it when you were her age?

AM: When Emily gets older, I'll tell how I lived growing up. When she doesn't finish her meal, I tell her about kids out there hungry like I was. I want her to appreciate life, and I would die before I'd let her go through what I went through.

The Ring: Do some people still think you're 16?

AM: Maybe 18 *(laughs)*. I always get carded when I go out. I don't appear to be the age that I am. But I don't mind it. Vic kept calling me kid *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Speaking of Vic Darchinyan: Is he as annoying as other fighters say he is?

AM: Great question *(laughs)*. Vic's not that annoying. I had no problems with him before or after the fight. He signed a few pictures for my camp and me. I signed a few pictures for him and his camp. After the fight, he said to me that I fought a good fight. He gave me my credit. He was always referring to me as the kid. There you go, I'm 18 again *(laughs)*. I was signing pictures for one of Darchinyan's camp when someone mentioned if we could be friends after the fight—and I said yes.

Vic likes to use intimidation. He looks crazy—yes he does *(laughs)*. But I didn't let that get to me. People see this nice guy, and they don't know what I've been through or what I've seen. I saw scarier people than Vic, I can tell you that *(laughs)*. After the fight, he came up to me and said the decision wasn't my fault and that he had a problem with the ref. I was okay with that. I respected Vic after the fight. I always respected him—but I don't know if he looks at me as the same kid anymore *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Did Darchinyan ever hurt you?

AM: That knockdown came more from me being off balance than anything else. There were other punches during the fight that did sting me. The only time I thought I was in trouble was early in the fight. I felt I could take his punch. I knew I could take it and felt that's why I could keep going forward.

The Ring: What was your strategy for Darchinyan?

AM: My game plan changed because of the cut. Our game plan was to counterpunch him. But because of the knockdown and cut, everything went out the window, and I went into being the old Abner not caring—and not wanting to lose. What was going on inside my head was there was no way he could beat me, there was no way I was losing that fight.

In the fifth, sixth round, I felt like I was starting to take control. When I hit him with the bodyshots, I started to hear him moan. I knew he was feeling my punches. I knew the bodywork would have an effect. The last two or three rounds, he had nothing. He was too tired.

The Ring: How did you meet Mike Vital, your manager?

AM: I was still a kid when I met Mike. I think I was around 13, 14. It was in a boxing gym, and Mike was the one who ran it, the Norwalk Boxing Complex, in Norwalk, California. They closed the Hawaiian Gardens Gym, where I used to work out, and here I was this kid taking the bus a half-hour to Norwalk every day. My father would buy bus passes for me to take the bus so I could work out with Joey Olivo, one of my amateur coaches. The first few times, my dad went with me, and my father told Mike what was going on—that I was this little troublemaker *(laughs)*. Mike treated me like a punk at first—made me learn and never gave me a smile *(laughs)*.

I started winning tournaments, national tournaments, and PAL tournaments. Mike knew all of the other stuff that was going on with me. He knew that during the summer was a time when it got even more dangerous. He helped me get a job at the gym. I didn't like Mike at all when I first met him *(laughs)*. We laugh about that all of the time. It's what Mike does now. He deals with the kids the way I was.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

"I wanted to be like Julio Cesar Chavez. Everyone used to imitate his bodyshots. I remember watching him fight Oscar De La Hoya—and I hated Oscar when he beat Chavez *(laughs)*. Chavez was a national hero to us. Every Mexican kid wanted to be Julio Cesar Chavez growing up."

The Ring: How much of a role has Mike played in your career—and in your life?

AM: Mike has played a big role. He was the one who led me to where I am right now. Without him and his connections, I'm 100-percent sure I wouldn't be where I am today. There is a strong connection between the two of us. I talk to the school where Mike teaches and tell them what I've been through. Mike is like a dad to me. There are a lot of idiots in boxing. I've been fortunate to have Mike in my career. Mike didn't give up on me when a lot of people did. I was a bad kid—and he steered me in the right direction. He's not only going to be a part of my boxing, but my life.

The Ring: Talk about the first time you met Yonnhy Perez at the PanAm games and what happened?

AM: Yonnhy came up to me after his fight, and we were all congratulating each other. He asked me where I bought my boxing shoes and told me they were really nice. I told him how much they cost, and he said "Wow." I remember taking my shoes and telling him, "Here, you can have them." I don't know if his feet fit in them, but I don't remember him putting his original shoes back on. I remember I helped him get to the States. Yonnhy, Alfredo Angulo, and myself all stayed with Mike for about two years. I was signed with Golden Boy, and my dad and Mike got Yonnhy. We're still friendly together. Everyone went their own separate ways.

The Ring: Who are some of the fighters you patterned your style after?

AM: There's no question about that, I wanted to be like Julio Cesar Chavez. Everyone used to imitate his bodyshots. I remember watching him fight Oscar De La Hoya—and I hated Oscar when he beat Chavez *(laughs)*. Chavez was a national hero to us. Every Mexican kid wanted to be Julio Cesar Chavez growing up.

The Ring: What do you expect from "King Kong" Agbeko?

AM: I expect a tough fight. I expect him to fight me. I don't see him boxing me because I'm not someone like Yonnhy who will stay there and get hit. I'll have a different game plan, like I do for every fight. The hard part about Agbeko is that you don't know the style he will bring into the ring. He has a weird style. He throws a lot of punches, and he has a great chin. I expect a tough fight. I'll be ready for this fight. This will be the fight that opens the bigger doors to [Fernando] Montiel and [Nonito] Donaire.

The Ring: What concerns you most about Agbeko?

AM: I don't really have any concerns. I don't. I have the same attitude when it comes to my fights. I don't really have concerns about any fighter I face. My only concern is losing. I don't want to sound cocky, but I worry what I have to do to win. There will be fireworks in this fight. I'll guarantee that. Once you let something concern you about other fighters, that's when fears start getting to you. I'm not the one that gets concerned or fears when I get in that the ring.

The Ring: Let's play a name game. I'll say a name or subject, and you give me a brief response. Let's start with Alfredo Angulo?

VIC VICTORY

Mares lands a right to Darchinyan's face en route to winning a 12-round decision in the first round of Showtime's bantamweight tournament. "Vic likes to use intimidation," said Mares." He looks crazy—yes he does (laughs). But I didn't let that get to me."

PHOTO BY STEPHEN BRASHEAR/HOGANPHOTOS/GBP

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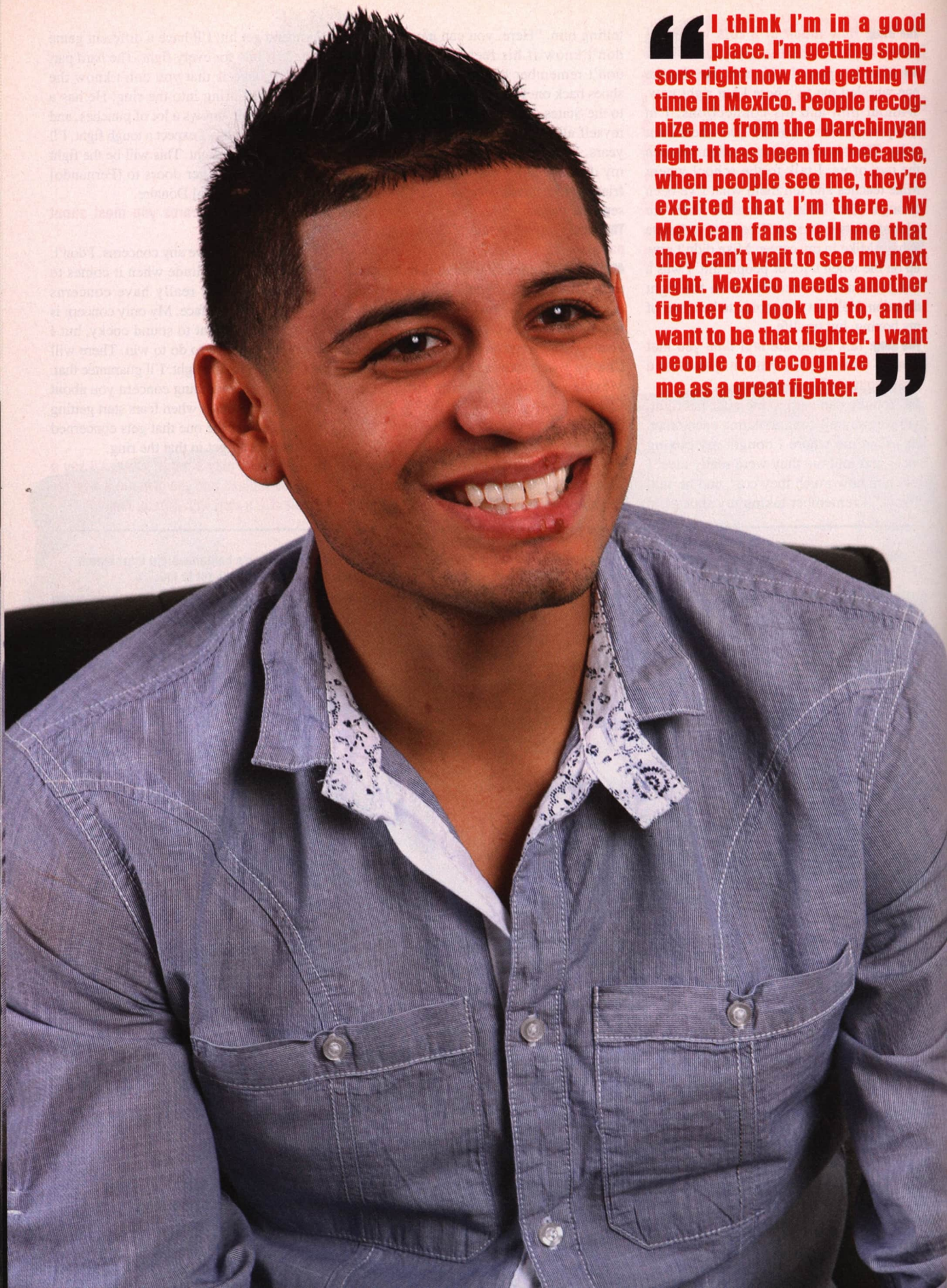


"I think I'm in a good place. I'm getting sponsors right now and getting TV time in Mexico. People recognize me from the Darchinyan fight. It has been fun because, when people see me, they're excited that I'm there. My Mexican fans tell me that they can't wait to see my next fight. Mexico needs another fighter to look up to, and I want to be that fighter. I want people to recognize me as a great fighter."

AM: A mean guy in the ring, but really a friend.

The Ring: Manny Pacquiao?

AM: The nicest guy in the world. Humble.

The Ring: Oscar De La Hoya?

AM: Smart.

The Ring: Richard Schaefer?

AM: A smart businessman.

The Ring: Rafael Marquez?

AM: Technician.

The Ring: Talk about your relationship with trainer Clemente Medina?

AM: I've gone back to where I started. Clemente was my mitt man, and he was with me for my first seven to 10 pro fights. The reason we split up wasn't really anything between us. Joe Hernandez was working with me, and Joe and Clemente split. A year later, I decided to change and go with Floyd Mayweather Sr. I thought it was a good move at the time. Floyd's a great trainer. He just didn't train for my style.

I lived at Floyd Sr.'s house, and I met his family. I'd see Little Floyd on occasion. Believe it or not, they're a really, really good family *(laughs)*. I don't think they're as nuts as everyone outside their family thinks they are *(laughs)*. They do, however, have a big entourage, but the Mayweathers are good people. They treated me really well.

I remember the first time I met Little Floyd. He pulled up to the gym in this yellow Lamborghini, and he asked me if I was the new fighter his father was working with. Floyd said he heard some good things about me, and then he pointed to his Lamborghini and said, "Like what you see? If you want to be like me, work hard" *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Where has the politics of boxing fit into your career?

AM: I think it came up in the Yonnhy Perez fight. I knew I won that fight. It's nothing Yonnhy did, but the draw in that fight hurt. It was a close fight. I won't dispute that. But I would have been world champion already at the age of 24 if I had beat him. Politics may have been involved. Maybe. But things happen for a reason, and, right after that fight, Showtime kicked in with the bantamweight tournament. I'm grateful to Showtime for giving me the exposure.

The Ring: Where are you in your life?

AM: I think I'm in a good place. I'm getting sponsors right now and getting TV time in Mexico. People recognize me from that Darchinyan fight. I don't find it surprising that they didn't like Vic that much in Mexico *(laughs)*. It has been fun because, when people see me, they're excited that I'm there. My Mexican fans tell me that they can't wait to see my next fight. Mexico needs another fighter to look up and I want to be that fighter. I want people to recognize me as a great fighter.

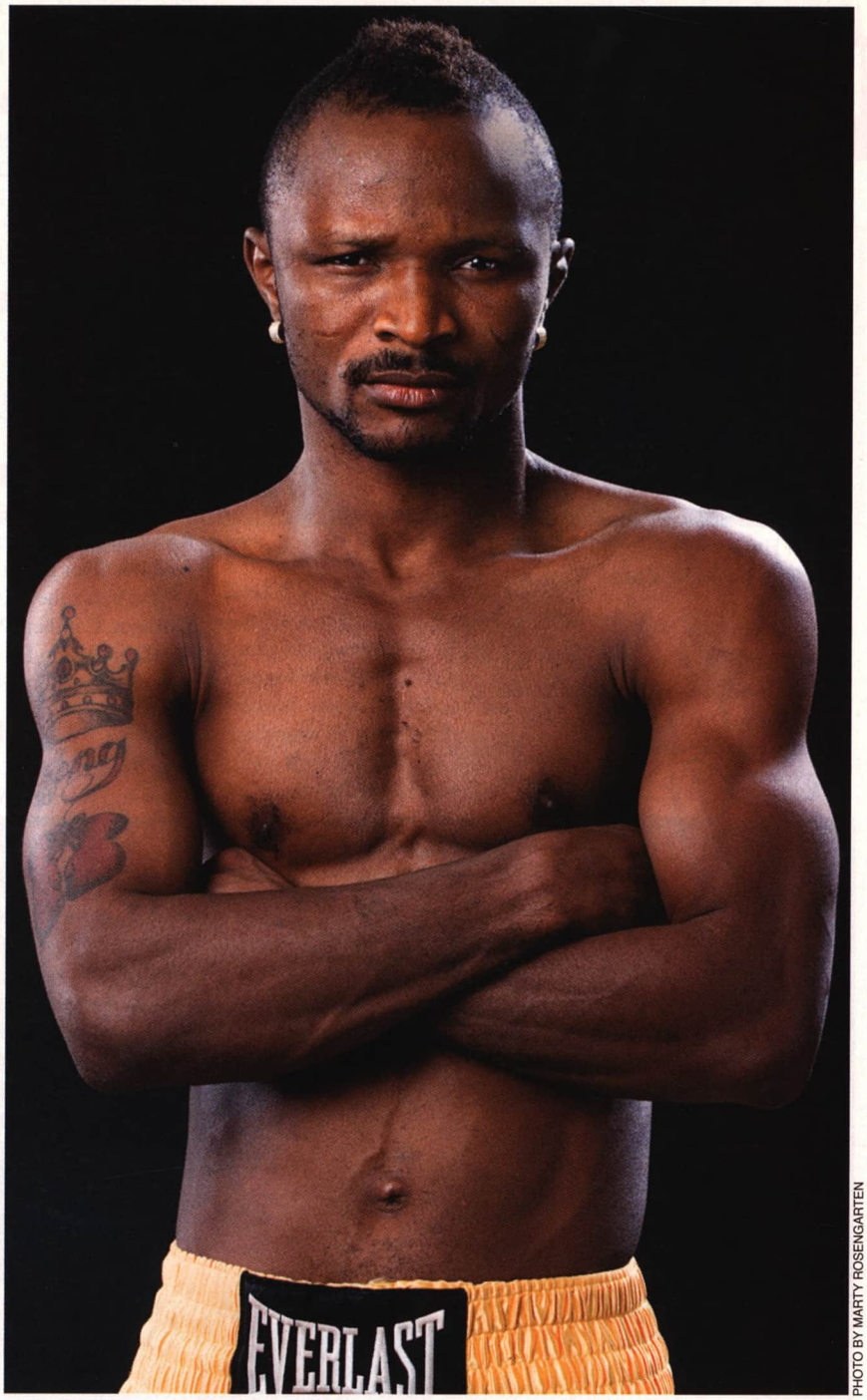


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

KING KONG ON DECK

Agbeko, who beat Yonnhy Perez on the same card that featured Mares-Darchinyan, will face Mares in the finals. Agbeko has a weird style," said Mares. "He throws a lot of punches, and he has a great chin. I expect a tough fight."

The Ring: How long do you see yourself fighting for?

AM: My cut off age is 30. It scares me to think I could end up like some older fighters. I want to be able to remember things. I definitely want to stop this early. I want to be able to be with my daughter and enjoy my grandkids. I'm living in a nice house, and I want to live the American Dream. I'm not living it yet, but I'm getting there *(laughs)*. If I could, I'd like to buy my mother a house. I'm living comfortably right now. I would like to be a multi-division world champion—and that starts with beating Agbeko. I know every Mexican is looking for its first four-time division titlist. I want to be it. ■

WORLDWIDE FIGHT RESULTS

Heavyweights

Evander Holyfield NC 3 Sherman Williams
Kevin Johnson W 8 Julius Long
Cedric Boswell KO 2 Dominique Alexander
Charles Davis D 8 Monte Barrett
Carlos Negron W 8 Willie Herring
Zoltan Petranyi KO 5 Laszlo Toth
Lisandro Ezequiel Diaz KO 1 Dany Lobo

Cruiserweights

Rogelio Rossi KO 5 Cesar Crenz
Zeferino Albino KO 2 John Poore
Mettin Huizer KO 1 Fred Dillewaard
Iago Kiladze KO 1 Zoltan Czekus

Super Middleweights

Peter Manfredo Jr. W 10 Daniel Edouard
Edwin Rodriguez W 10 Aaron Pryor Jr.
Paul Morby D 10 Daniel Cadman
Server Yemurlayev KO 8 Anton Sjomkin
Marco Rubio KO 8 Wilson Santana
Said Mbelwa D 10 Selemani Said
Noe Alcoba KO 3 Gustavo Magallanes
Marcelo Leandro Da Silva KO 3 Paulo Da Silva
Rachid Jkitou W 8 Ivan Maslov

Middleweights

Yves Studer W 12 Samir Dos Santos Barbosa
Israel Carrillo W 12 Michael Recloux
Vitaliy Kopylenko KO 7 Zdravko Nikolov
Marco Antonio Avendano KO 4 Julio Cardozo
Marcos Reyes KO 1 Rito Ruvalcaba

Junior Middleweights

Erislandy Lara KO 1 Delray Raines
Hanna Gabriel KO 10 Melisenda Perez
Dwi AMX KO 6 Arga Soka
Hanna Gabriel KO 10 Melisenda Perez

Welterweights

Diego Chaves W 12 Omar Weis
Ravshan Hudaynazarov KO 10 Jose Luis Cruz
Jackson Osei Bonsu W Disq. 2 Luiz Augusto Dos Santos
Victor Velazquez KO 2 Lucas Obregon
Terrance Cauthen W 6 Philip McCants
Adailton Bruno Dos Santos KO 2 Andre De Araujo
Joaquim Carneiro KO 1 Darli Goncalves Pires

Junior Welterweights

Jose Lopez W 12 Cesar Soto
Mauricio Herrera W 12 Ruslan Provodnikov

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Beibut Shumenov KO 6 William Joppy
(Retains WBA Title)
Danny McIntosh KO 11 Thierry Karl
Blake Prevost W 10 Will McIntyre
Lafarrell Bunting W 10 Matt O'Brien
Miguel Velozo W 10 Tomas Adamek
Gayrat Ahmedov KO 4 Tursunboy Abdullakimov
Charles Hayward KO 2 Jason Burrell
Geard Ajetovic KO 1 Jackson Chanet

TASTE THIS
Light heavyweight Danny McIntosh extends a right into the mouth of Thierry Karl

PHOTO BY MIGUEL MEDINA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Oleh Yefimovych W 12 Philippe Frenois
Michael Farenas W 10 Ariel Delgado
Juan Rodriguez KO 8 Ariel Vasquez
Katsuhiko Kanno KO 6 Tatsuyuki Nasu
Edgar Monarrez KO 5 Rafael Cerrillo
Vacharakrit Senahan KO 5 Waijingje Sithsaithong
Roberto Marroquin KO 4 Eduardo Arcos
Jesse Magdaleno KO 3 Cain Garcia
Corey White KO 3 Joey Tiberi
Joaquin Vargas KO 3 Alfredo Mendez
Jose Alberto Gonzalez KO 3 Tomas Sierra
Jesus Cuellar KO 2 Jose Saez
Stanyslav Merdov KO 2 Nikoloz Berkatsashvili

STAYING PERFECT
Featherweight Roberto Marroquin kept a clean slate by wiping out Eduardo Arcos

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Volodymyr Kravets KO 10 Bastien Laforge
Lucas Matthysse KO 8 DeMarcus Corley
Carl Johanneson W 8 George Watson
Alexander Zhuravskiy KO 6 Ruben Galvan
Steve Claggett KO 3 Jose Mendoza
Delfine Persoon KO 3 Daniela David
Roberto Ortiz KO 3 Oscar Solis

Lightweights

Derry Mathews W 12 Scott Lawton
Patomsuk Pathompothong KO 3 Changpha Ubon-Combat
Behzod Nabiyev KO 2 Babur Beshimov
Aristides Perez KO 2 Jesus Perez
Saddam Kietyongyuth KO 2 Eddy Comaro
Thai Tor Silachai KO 2 Arnel Donal
Adrien Broner KO 1 John Revish
Jay Solmiano KO 1 Jaypee Ignacio
Osnel Charles W 6 Victor Vasquez

Junior Lightweights

Miguel Roman KO 1 Angel Priolo
Dante Jardon W 10 Rene Gonzalez
James Bacon W 10 Jake Verano
Michael Farenas W 10 Ariel Delgado
Emmanuel Lucero W 10 Oscar Cuero
Luis Carlos Martinez KO 7 Eduardo Julio
Fermin De los Santos KO 7 Alexis Salinas
Hiroshige Osawa KO 7 Gabriel Perez
Napapol Kiatisakchokchai KO 6 Hirotsugu Yamamoto
Diego Magdaleno KO 5 Marcos Leonardo Jimenez
Fahsai Sakkreerin KO 2 Yersin Jailauov
Victor Orozco KO 2 Mario Gonzalez

Junior Featherweights

Jason Egera W 10 Rolando Magbanua
Sod Kokietgym W 6 Jay-r Mendoza
Caril Herrera KO 6 Miguel Villegas
Armando Cardona KO 5 Hector Mancina
Tomoki Kameda KO 3 Pichitchai Twins Gym
Ramie Laput KO 2 Rodel Veronquez
Miguel Antonio Samgueza KO 2 Juan Nunez
Jonathan Oquendo KO 1 Cecilio Santos
Sukkasem Kietyongyuth KO 1 Carlos Lopez

Bantamweights

Koki Kameda W 12 Alexander Munoz
Jobson Adams W 12 Perpetual Mkandawire
Jamie McDonnell W 12 Stephane Jamoye
Hagar Finer W 10 Nadege Szikora
Rodolfo Hernandez W 10 Jose Gonzalez
Saturnino Nava W 10 Juan Velasquez
Hugo Ruiz Tech. Draw 9 Alvaro Perez
Yodchanchai Nakornloung Promotion KO 5 Yuta Nakagawa
Chaiyong Sithsaithong KO 3 Kriengkrai Sithsaithong
Hugo Berrio KO 2 Jose Castro
Christian Esquivel KO 2 Eduardo Garcia

Junior Bantamweights

Hugo Fidel Cazares W 12 Hiroyuki Hisataka
(Retains WBA Title)
Oscar Ibarra W 12 Junichiro Sugita
Johnny Garcia W 12 William Urina
Daniel Noriega W 10 Ulises Lara
Ana Maria Torres W 10 Naoko Yamaguchi
Dado Cabintoy KO 2 Julius Agcopra
Srisaket Sithsaithong KO 1 Okamitsu Takeshi

Flyweights

Daiki Kameda W 12 Silvio Olteanu
(Retains WBA Title)
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam KO 4 Heri Purnomo
(Non-Title Fight)
Juan Carlos Reveco W 10 Miguel Tellez
Suriyan Por Chokchai W 12 Takashi Kunishige
Panomroonglek Kaiyarn-Hadaogym KO 7 Javier Malulan Jose
Alfredo Zuniga KO 3 Irving Cortes
Oscar Blanquet KO 1 Arturo Castro

Junior Flyweights

Job Solano KO 1 Christian Esquivel
Irma Sanchez W 10 Katia Gutierrez

Strawweights

Oleydong Sithsamerchai KO 4 Heri Purnomo
Ganigan Lopez W 12 Armando Torres
Wanheng Menayothin Tech. Win 10 Remy Cuambot
Paipharob Kokietgym KO 5 Nelson Llanos

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Compiled by Don Stewart

MATCH STATS

Division: Bantamweight • **Location:** Saitama, Japan
Date: December 26, 2010 • **Promoter:** Kusunoki Miyoshi Promotions **Referee:** Roberto Ramirez (Puerto Rico)

Koki Kameda	Alexander Munoz
Age: 24	**Age:** 31 • **Weight:** 118
Weight: 118	**Residence:** San Felix, Venezuela
Residence: Tokyo, Japan	**Birthplace:** Miranda, Venezuela
Birthplace: Osaka, Japan	**Record:** 35-4 (27)
Record: 24-1 (15)	
RING Ranking: 1 (Flyweight)	

NEW BELT FOR KOKI
Kameda floors Munoz in the 12th en route to a unanimous decision

PHOTO BY TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

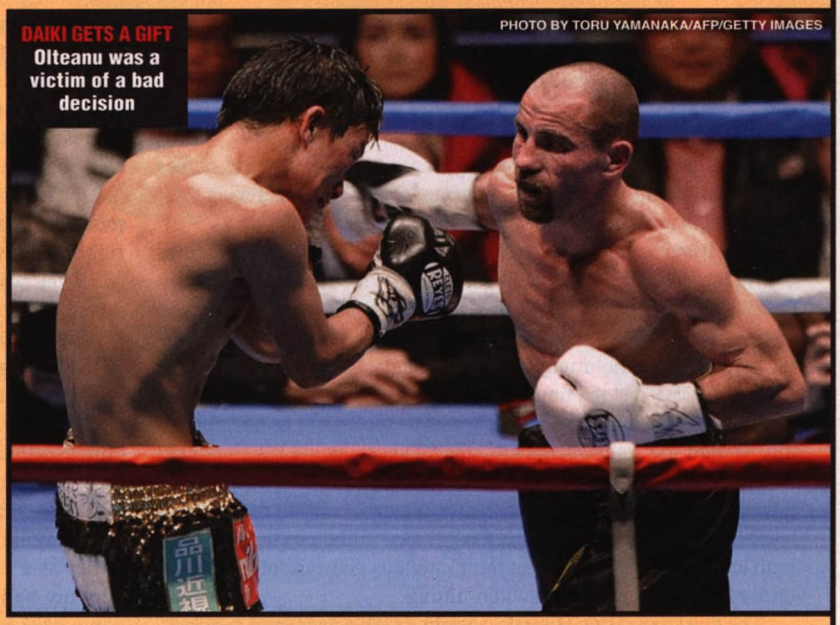
Koki Kameda W 12 Alexander Munoz

Japanese southpaw Kameda acquired the vacant WBA bantamweight belt and a spot at number 10 in THE RING 118-pound ratings as he dropped Venezuelan veteran Munoz with a left-right combination in the last round and pounded out a unanimous decision over 12 rounds at Super Arena.

Kameda, who was ranked first at flyweight, moved up two weight classes to capture his third belt in as many divisions. He acquired the WBA 108-pound belt by a hotly disputed decision against Juan Landaeta in 2006. Kameda then gained the WBC flyweight belt by defeating compatriot Daisuke Naito in 2009, but lost it to Pongsaklek Wongjongkam in a bout for the vacant RING world title last March.

Daiki Kameda W 12 Silvio Olteanu

Kameda barely kept his WBA flyweight belt as he eked out a controversial split decision against aggressive European titlist Olteanu over 12 rounds at Super Arena.



DAIKI GETS A GIFT
Olteanu was a victim of a bad decision

PHOTO BY TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Olteanu was the aggressor all the way. The 32-year-old Romanian looked dominant and aggressive throughout the monotonous contest. Kameda's severe reduction of weight likely caused him to toss a punch at a time rather than throw many punches in retaliation. Kameda was viewed as the harder puncher, which might have swayed the two judges who scored it in his favor, but Olteanu, a soft punching but much busier speedster, seemed to have controlled the bout and appeared to be robbed.

Two weeks later, Kameda announced that he was vacating the belt due to difficulties in making the 112-pound limit. "My legs seemed paralyzed from the eighth round on due to my too severe reduction of weight," he said after relinquishing the belt. "I apologize for my poor showing caused by my terrible weight-making [struggles]." For what it's worth, the WBA promoted "interim" beltholder Luis Concepcion to full titlist.

Olteanu won the 118-pound European belt by defeating Alain Bonnel on points in Madrid, Spain, in December 2009. He registered his initial defense by beating Bernard Inom (who, in 22 bouts, had only lost to Omar Narvaez in a 2006 shot at the WBO flyweight belt) by a unanimous decision last May.

Olteanu was nothing but a harmless air windmill, while Kameda was a hollow shell who threw very few punches in each round. Kameda was disappointing, but Olteanu was also poor. But at least Olteanu, shorter in height by four inches, kept throwing punches at the peek-a-boo stylist Kameda. The sluggish titlist displayed his willingness to defend his belt only in the eighth and ninth rounds but remained cautious and reluctant from the 10th on.

Jose Roberto Torres (Puerto Rico) scored it 115-113 and Levi Martinez (USA) had it 116-112, both for Kameda, while Roberto Ramirez (Puerto Rico) saw it quite differently at 118-110 for Olteanu. THE RING scored it 117-110, giving only three rounds (the second, eighth, and ninth) to Kameda, who made his second defense.

"I hope to relinquish this flyweight belt and move up to the heavier class," Kameda said afterward. "If so, I may be able to show a better performance."

Joe Koizumi

MATCH STATS

Division: Flyweight
Location: Saitama, Japan
Date: December 26, 2010
Promoter:
Kusunoki Miyoshi Promotions
Referee: Pinit Prayadsab (Thailand)

Daiki Kameda
Age: 21
Weight: 112
Residence: Tokyo, Japan
Birthplace: Osaka, Japan
Record: 19-2 (11)

Silvio Olteanu
Age: 32
Weight: 112
Residence: Madrid, Spain
Birthplace: Romania
Record: 11-4 (5)

His 118-pound debut was a seesaw affair as Munoz kept throwing roundhouse punches, while Kameda defended himself with a peek-a-boo guard and occasionally countered with southpaw lefts.

Munoz was previously unbeaten against Japanese opponents in all seven world title bouts there, but Kameda made him look like a shell of his former self. Munoz often lost his balance after missing with looping lefts and rights. He attempted to target the younger Kameda's body, but his bodypunching seemed ineffective.

In round one, Munoz began by throwing wild punches at the cautious southpaw. He also took the second as he kept tossing wild combinations, often missing his target. The third and fourth seemed to go to Kameda, who won points by throwing a few countering lefts economically just after Munoz missed on his roundhouse punches.

Munoz tried to stop the mobility of Kameda by throwing solid bodyshots, winning points in the fifth and sixth rounds. But Munoz was penalized a point for repeated rabbit punches midway through round six. As Munoz began to slow down, Kameda gradually accelerated his attacks and occasionally landed solid lefts to win the seventh through 10th rounds.

In the final round, Kameda came out fighting and exploded with a left-right combination that sent the fading Venezuelan sprawling to the deck for a mandatory eight count. Kameda had him at bay and almost dropped the groggy former junior bantamweight beltholder again with solid shots to the head.

The knockdown sealed the victory for Kameda. Levi Martinez (USA) scored it 115-111, Pint Prayadsab (Thailand) had it 116-109, and Jose Roberto Torres (Puerto Rico) saw it 117-109, all in favor of Kameda.

"I'm happy to dedicate this victory to my supporters and my family," Kameda said afterward. "I wish to be good champion."

Joe Koizumi

Hugo Cazares W 12 Hiroyuki Hisataka

Mexican switch-hitter Cazares, rated the top 115-pounder in the world by THE RING, kept his WBA belt as he pounded out a unanimous decision against counterpunching Japanese Hisataka over 12 gory rounds at Prefectural Gymnasium.

The fighting champ Cazares registered his third defense in less than eight months since dethroning Japan's Nobuo Nashiro in their grudge fight at the same arena last May.

For Hisataka, it was his third crack at a title following his failures to win the WBA flyweight belt from compatriot Takefumi Sakata in 2008 and from Denkaosen Kaowichit in 2009. He went to Thailand last May and scored an upset eighth-round stoppage against previously unbeaten Panomrunglek Kaiyarn Hadaogym, who was ranked first by the WBC at the time.

Ultimately, Hisataka's strategy was unsuccessful as he continually waited too long for his countering shots, while Cazares kept punching steadily to pile up points. The baby-faced Japanese made a good start, throwing good rights to Cazares' belly in the opening round, but Cazares quickly retaliated to win the next two rounds with ease, as Hisataka became more cautious and careful in the face of the Mexican's puzzling switch-hitting.

The third round saw Hisataka sustain a gash caused by a headbutt, which kept streaming blood until the end of the bout. In round four, Hisataka connected with a solid right that caught Cazares' attention for the first time, as Cazares had looked a little overconfident by underestimating the Japanese challenger's credentials and power.

Hisataka neglected to throw jabs or combinations throughout the contest, electing instead to focus on countering his awkward opponent. Cazares easily accumulated points simply because of Hisataka's lack of action, especially in middle rounds. Hisataka enjoyed his best moments in round eight, when he stunned Cazares with a well-timed right and desperately threw solid combinations at the bewildered Mexican, who was saved by the bell. The ninth was a close round where neither man could score with precision.

Cazares, with more experience and composure, swept the last three rounds with great ease to seal his victory. He kept throwing jabs from his switch-hitting stance and often connected with southpaw lefts.

The official tallies were as follows: Russell Mora (USA) and Gustavo Padilla (Panama) both had it 117-111, and Sergio Caiz (USA) scored it 116-112, all for Cazares.

"Hisataka was a better boxer than I thought," Cazares said. "He may have a good chance to fight for the world belt again, either as a 112-pounder or a 115-pounder. I feel happy to have kept my belt in Osaka where I acquired the championship. I may come back here again."

Joe Koizumi

MATCH STATS

	Hugo Cazares	Hiroyuki Hisataka
Division: Junior Bantamweight	**Age:** 32 • **Weight:** 115	**Age:** 25
Location: Osaka, Japan	**Residence:** Los Mochis, Mexico	**Weight:** 114¾
Date: December 23, 2010	**Birthplace:** Los Mochis, Mexico	**Residence:** Osaka, Japan
Promoter: Nakazato Atsumi Promotions	**Record:** 34-6-2 (24)	**Birthplace:** Osaka, Japan
Referee: Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico)	**RING Ranking:** 1	**Record:** 19-9-1 (8)

Mauricio Herrera W 12 Ruslan Provodnikov

During his amateur days, Herrera actually worked as a ditch digger when he wasn't training. He dug deep against Provodnikov to pull off the biggest win of his career though, after 12 grueling rounds with the relentless Siberian, Herrera looked like he'd been hit in the face with a shovel.

Herrera used his longer jab and better defensive skills to get past the previously unbeaten Provodnikov at Cox Arena in one of the year's first big upsets. Herrera also ventured inside frequently and held his own in some fantastic exchanges with his stronger opponent, who sported a badly swollen right eye by fight's end.

"That's what my plan was: It was either the outside or stay inside and smother him, but not stay in his range," Herrera told ESPN2 after the fight, his left eye purple and nearly closed and his right eye also a narrow slit.

Provodnikov had the slightly longer reach, but it was evident from the early going that Herrera was quicker and slicker. He took the first two rounds with his jab and punch output as Provodnikov moved forward and tried to cut off the ring. He caught Herrera midway through the third round with a slicing left hook that began to close Herrera's left eye. Provodnikov's power and increasingly busier pace seemed to be taking the juice out of Herrera's legs.

MATCH STATS

	Mauricio Herrera	Ruslan Provodnikov
Division: Junior Welterweight	**Age:** 30 • **Weight:** 140	**Age:** 26 • **Weight:** 140
Location: Las Vegas, NV	**Residence:** Lake Elsinore, CA	**Residence:** Ekaterinburg, Russia
Date: January 7, 2011	**Birthplace:** Lake Elsinore, CA	**Birthplace:** Beryozovo, Russia
Television: ESPN2	**Record:** 16-1 (7)	**Record:** 17-1 (11)
Promoters: Star Boxing, Banner Promotions		
Referee: Russell Mora (Nevada)		

PHOTO BY JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

CAZARES DEFENDS
Cazares fires a right at Hisataka

But Herrera came back strong in the fourth and fifth when he ventured inside and outworked Provodnikov to get the better of the exchanges. While Herrera used effective lateral movement and fluid combinations, Provodnikov only moved forward, struggled to put his shots together, and tried to use a shell-like defense with his arms and gloves, though he did land well to the body.

The ringside doctor examined Herrera's left eye before the sixth round, the first of four times that he appeared ready to stop it. Herrera said he wanted to continue, then proceeded to trade with Provodnikov in the sixth and seventh, which were two of the best rounds of the fight as both fought at a heavy pace and landed frequently, with Herrera seeming to get the better of it.

Herrera, who turned pro three years ago at age 27, moved back to the outside in the next three rounds, when Provodnikov's pressure appeared to give him the edge. Herrera went back on the attack in the final two rounds, and Provodnikov landed several right hands at Herrera's grotesquely swollen left eye.

The Nevada judges all had it for Herrera, with Duane Ford and Richard Houck each scoring it 116-112, and Adalaide Byrd seeing it 115-113. THE RING had it 115-113 for Herrera. Apparently thinking he did enough to win, Provodnikov quickly exited the ring after the scores were announced.

It was a close fight, as evidenced by the CompuBox numbers. Provodnikov landed 326 of 886 shots, as opposed to 300 of 898 for Herrera, who won his third straight since a split decision loss to Mike Anchondo in December 2009.

"I was focused," Herrera said. "I didn't know how bad my eyes were. I didn't know they were that swollen. All I knew was I wanted to win this fight. I wanted it that bad."

UPSET WINNER
Herrera ended Provodnikov's unbeaten streak

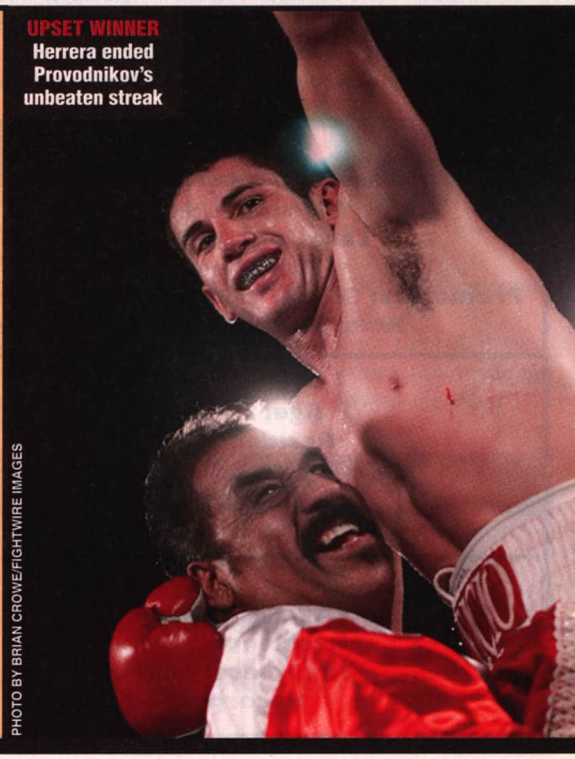


PHOTO BY BRIAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Beibut Shumenov KO 6 William Joppy

Faded veteran Joppy, who was supposed to fight on the undercard, stepped in and saved the promotion after Shumenov's original opponent, WBO beltholder Jürgen Brähmer, suddenly withdrew five days before the fight due to a stomach illness. If the noble deed boosted Joppy's karma, it wasn't evident in the ring against Shumenov.

The 2004 Kazakhstani Olympian took a few rounds to adjust, then dominated Joppy in front of a big crowd at the Ice Mansion. It was Shumenov's second defense of the WBA belt he won with a controversial split decision against Gabriel Campillo in their rematch in January 2010.

Shumenov enjoyed advantages of five inches in height and nearly two inches in reach on Joppy, a 40-year-old former middleweight beltholder who has slipped into opponent status. The pace was slow in the early rounds as Shumenov established his range with his jab, while Joppy moved forward but struggled to get off shots. When Joppy did let his hands go, he tended to land as Shumenov proved easy to hit. Joppy's shots seemed to have little impact, however.

Shumenov, who had trained to fight a southpaw in Brähmer, connected with a flush right to the head of the orthodox Joppy late in the third and tried to come forward early in the fourth but went back to jabbing at long range after getting popped a few times on the inside.

Shumenov then landed a hard straight right to the chin midway through the fifth that floored Joppy, and it was only a matter of time from there. Joppy beat the count but took punishment until the bell. Shumenov was right back on the attack in the sixth, when he quickly ripped a left hook to the body that put Joppy on one knee, where he remained for the full 10 count. The official time was 1:5 seconds.

"I took a little while to get to Joppy because I had prepared four months to fight a southpaw," Shumenov said. "I'm happy but still want to be the undisputed light heavyweight champion of the world. That is my goal.

"I want to fight the best, the other three world champions. I can't be considered the best until I've beaten the other three champions."

Joppy fell to 0-3-1 in his last four fights. His last win a one-round kayo of Etianne Whitaker in November 2007. He reportedly told promoter Dan Goossen after the loss that he will retire.

MATCH STATS

Division: Light Heavyweight
Location: Shymkent, Kazakhstan
Date: January 8, 2011
Promoters: Goossen Tutor Promotions, KZ Event Productions
Referee: Nabijon Ismanov (Uzbekistan)

Beibut Shumenov
Age: 27 • **Weight:** 175
Residence: Las Vegas, NV
Birthplace: Shymkent, Kazakhstan
Record: 11-1 (7)
Ring Ranking: 8

William Joppy
Age: 40 • **Weight:** 174½
Residence: Woodbridge, VA
Birthplace: Washington, D.C.
Record: 39-7-2 (30)

Peter Manfredo Jr.

Still hoping for at least one more significant fight before he calls it a day, *Contender* alumni Manfredo Jr. overcame a slow start to outpoint the veteran Edouard in a *Friday Night Fights* main event at Mallory Square.

It was the sixth-straight win for Manfredo, who appeared to be finished as a serious contender when Sakio Bika stopped him in three rounds in November 2008. At the same time, Manfredo, who invested most of his money in real estate, was taking heavy financial losses that eventually forced him to go into bankruptcy and take a side job in his hometown of Providence, Rhode Island, at the Dunkin Donuts Center, where he fought five times earlier in his career.

Edouard, a 2005 kayo victim to Jermain Taylor who was coming off a decision loss to Alfonso Mosquera in Panama, said beforehand that he would retire if he didn't get past Manfredo. For three and a half rounds, it looked as if he would have a reason to go on fighting. The more active combatant early, Edouard moved in and out and pounded Manfredo with rights to the head and body, while Manfredo mostly jabbed from the outside.

Edouard was pushing Manfredo back and dominating the fourth round until Manfredo turned the fight around one minute before the bell. As the two separated from a clinch, Manfredo fired a right hand at Edouard, who neglected to keep his hands up. The shot caught Edouard cold and dropped him face first to the floor. He beat the count, and Manfredo didn't press to end it. The native Haitian was never the same again in the fight, however.

Manfredo began to get more aggressive in the fifth, when he continually drove Edouard backward and forced him to cover up along the ropes. Edouard's pace gradually slowed as Manfredo punished him from a comfortable distance. Manfredo's persistent body attack and a cut inside Edouard's mouth left him swallowing blood from the fourth round on also were factors.

Edouard looked ready to go in the seventh when Manfredo nearly dropped him late with a left hook-right hand-left hook

Edwin Rodriguez W

In the cofeature at Mallory Square, unbeaten super middleweight prospect Rodriguez overcame a left shoulder injury and a game effort from Pryor Jr. to keep his perfect record intact.

Rodriguez tore his rotator cuff in the second round, possibly during a clinch. The injury took away the left hand of "La Bomba," who was already facing a 6'4½" opponent with advantages of four inches in height and eight inches in reach.

"I believe I threw a left hook, and I missed, and I probably overextended my shoulder," Rodriguez told the *Worcester Telegram*. "There were a lot of clinches where he was pulling, shoving, and twisting, but I'm not sure exactly when it happened. It could have been from throwing a punch or him being rough inside and getting dirty."

Rodriguez outworked Pryor and landed well to the body to take the first two rounds. It was a different fight after the injury, however. Pryor began to make better use of his long jab, often throwing an effective right hand behind it, while Rodriguez resorted to lunging in with one right hand at a time. He often missed wildly and was countered by Pryor, who rocked Rodriguez with a right hand midway through the fourth.

W 10 Daniel Edouard

combo along the ropes. Edouard started the eighth more aggressively but was backing up again after Manfredo drilled him with a hard left hook to the body

In the ninth, Edouard went back to smothering Manfredo and had some success inside, but Manfredo regained his space in the final 45 seconds and tagged "The Haitian Sensation" repeatedly with rights to the face. Manfredo was able to play it safe in the 10th as Edouard, whose right eye was badly swollen, was too spent to attempt anything dramatic.

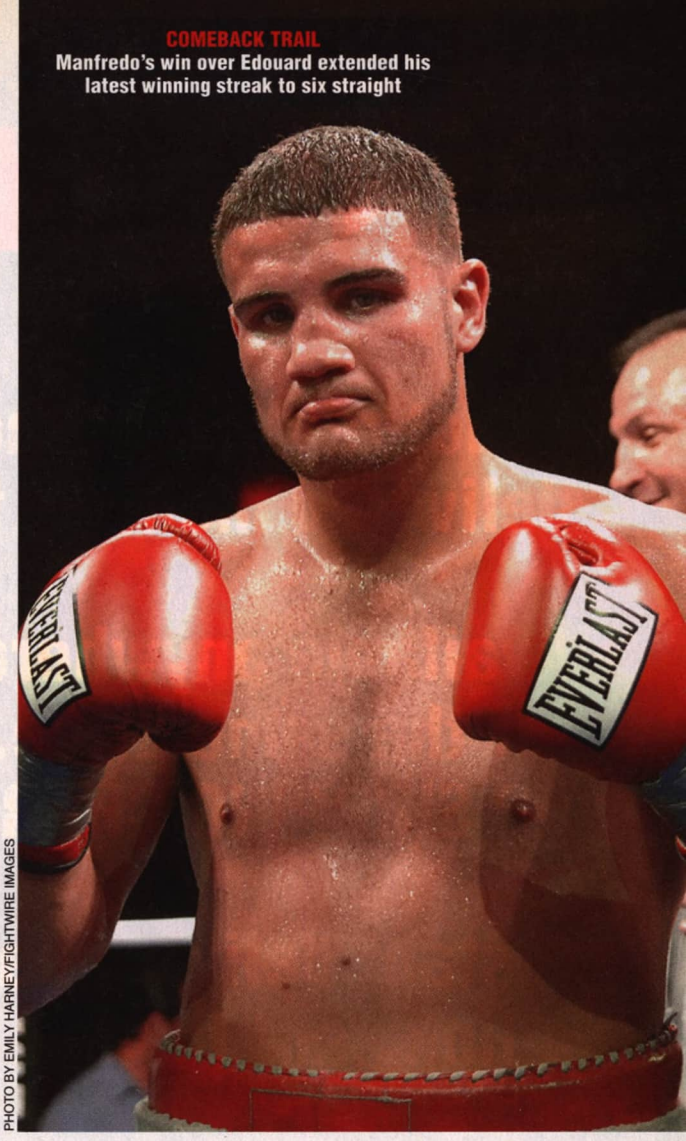
All three Florida judges scored it for Manfredo, with Michael Pernick and Rocky Young seeing it 98-91, and Bill Ray having it 97-92. THE RING agreed with Ray's tally. It was Manfredo's fourth-straight bout at middleweight.

"I didn't know what I had left," Manfredo told ESPN2 afterward. "I assume I do have something left [now]. I want to make one last run. That's why I'm back down to the middleweight division. I want to see what I can do here."

MATCH STATS

Division: Middleweight • **Location:** Key West, FL
Date: January 14, 2011 • **Television:** ESPN2
Promoters: DiBella Entertainment, DEJ Promotions
Referee: Telis Assimenios (FL)

Peter Manfredo Jr.	Daniel Edouard
Age: 30	**Age:** 30 • **Weight:** 163½
Weight: 162¼	**Residence:** West Palm Beach, FL
Residence: Providence, RI	**Birthplace:** Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Birthplace: Providence, RI	**Record:** 23-4-2 (14)
Record: 37-6 (20)	



COMEBACK TRAIL
Manfredo's win over Edouard extended his latest winning streak to six straight

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

10 Aaron Pryor Jr.

Pryor stung Rodriguez with a pair of solid rights in the final 10 seconds of the fifth to take the round. Pryor began mixing in a lead uppercut in the seventh when he again finished the round with a hard right hand that rocked Rodriguez.

In the eighth, referee Samuel Burgos took a point from Pryor for elbows to the head. Rodriguez still appeared frustrated, but his right hands were beginning to get through as he desperately attempted to pick up the pace. After close rounds in the eighth and ninth, Rodriguez dominated the final round with several hard shots, including a one-two with a minute remaining and a right hook 14 seconds before the bell.

All three Florida judges scored it decisively for Rodriguez. Richard Green had it 98-91, Rocky Young saw it 97-92, and Michael Pernick scored it 96-93. THE RING saw a much closer bout at 95-94 for Rodriguez.

Rodriguez' injury isn't career threatening, but, if he undergoes surgery, he's expected to miss eight to 12 months.

"I know it wasn't my best fight, but I got the job done," Rodriguez told the *Worcester Telegram*. "I think this made me a better person and a better fighter. It showed me what I'm made of." ■

MATCH STATS

Division: Super Middleweight
Location: Key West, FL
Date: January 14, 2011
Television: ESPN2
Promoters: DiBella Entertainment, DEJ Promotions
Referee: Samuel Burgos (FL)

Edwin Rodriguez	Aaron Pryor Jr.
Age: 25	**Age:** 32
Weight: 168½	**Weight:** 165½
Residence: Worcester, MA	**Residence:** Cincinnati, OH
Birthplace: Moca, Dominican Republic	**Birthplace:** Cincinnati, OH
Record: 18-0 (13)	**Record:** 15-3 (11)

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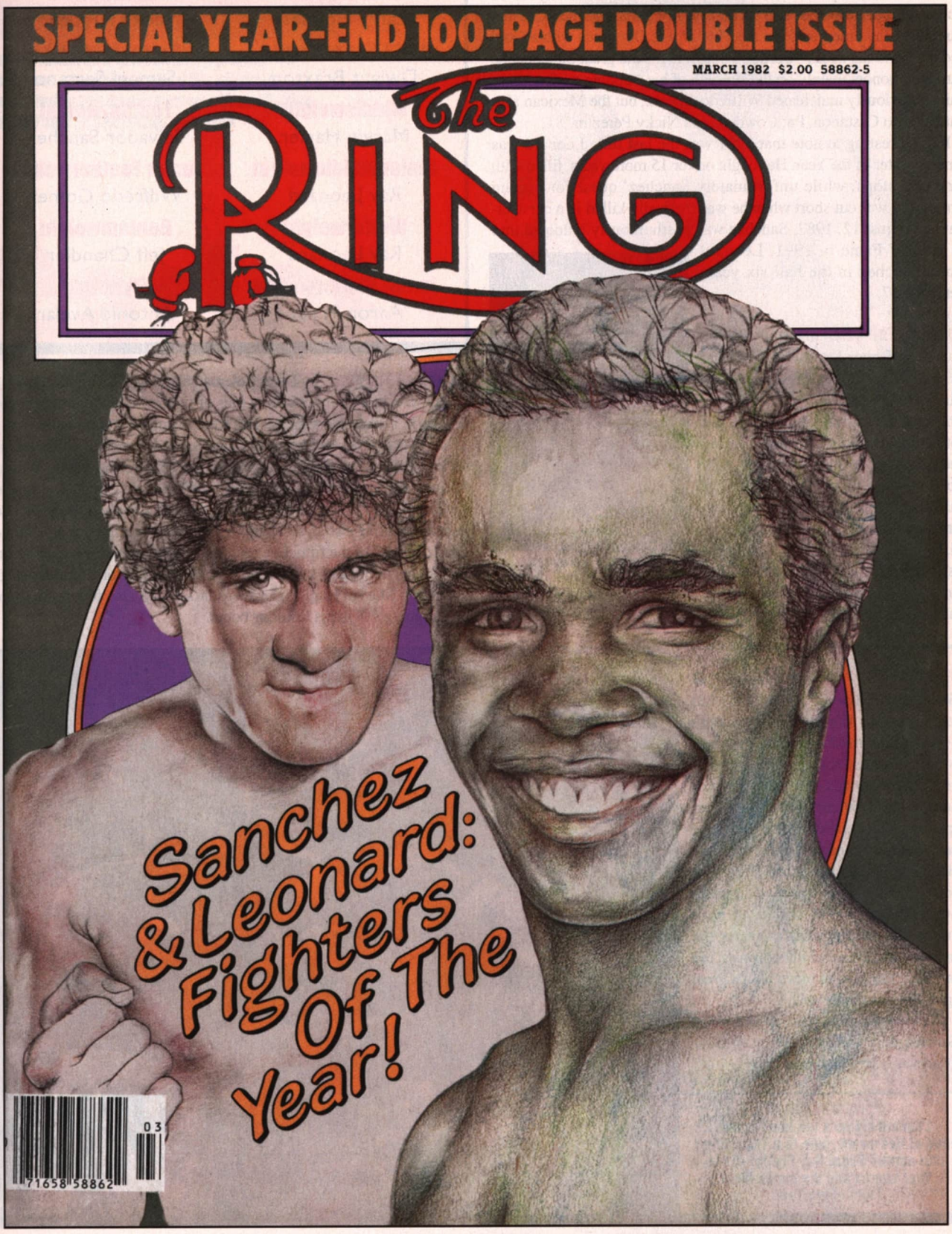
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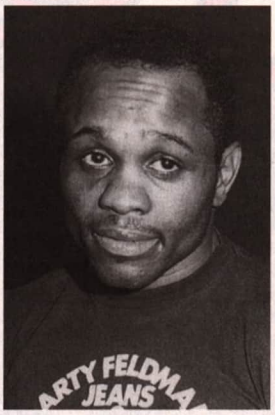
COVER STORY: The cover illustration of future Hall of Famers Ray Leonard and Salvador Sanchez marked the third time in the 53-year history of THE RING that the Fighter of the Year honors was shared. The first half of Randy Gordon's story is devoted to Leonard, who was named Fighter of the Year based on his sensational 14th-round knockout of Tommy Hearns. "Boxing has not boasted of anyone so young, vibrant, talented, and so thoroughly exciting since Cassius Marcellus Clay emerged from the 1960 Rome Olympics with a Gold Medal around his neck," Gordon wrote. As for the great Sanchez, he shared top honors mainly on the strength of his stunning performance against previously undefeated Wilfredo Gomez, but the Mexican also beat Roberto Castanon, Pat Cowdell, and Nicky Perez in '81.

It's interesting to note that 1981 was the last time Leonard was named Fighter of the Year. He fought on for 15 more years, filled with starts and stops, while unfortunately Sanchez' quest for boxing immortality was cut short when he was tragically killed in a car accident on August 12, 1982. Sanchez was posthumously inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1991. Leonard joined Sanchez in the hall six years later, in 1997.

"Upset Of The Year" by Ben Sharov focuses on Roger Stafford's 10-round decision victory over Pipino Cuevas. This was supposed to be a stay-busy fight for Cuevas, who was awaiting a shot against the Ray Leonard-Tommy Hearns winner or possibly a fight with Roberto Duran. No one figured Stafford would interrupt those plans. But Stafford sent Cuevas down in the second round, and, by the end of the bout, a "grotesque mask of blood covered Cuevas' face, but he managed to remain upright as the final seconds ticked away."



NO PUSHOVER
Stafford's surprising victory over Cuevas was Upset of the Year.

WORLD CHAMPIONS

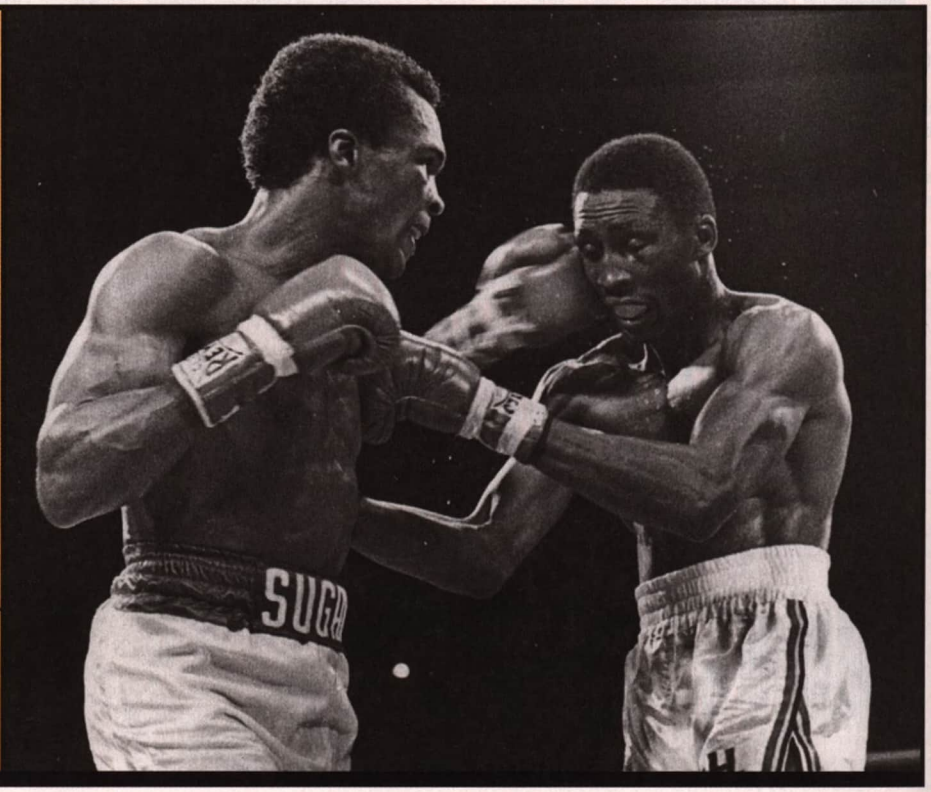
For the period ended February 1, 1982

Heavyweight	**Lightweight**
Larry Holmes	Alexis Arguello
Light Heavyweight	**Junior Lightweight**
Dwight Braxton	Samuel Serrano
Middleweight	**Featherweight**
Marvin Hagler	Salvador Sanchez
Junior Middleweight	**Junior Featherweight**
Ray Leonard	Wilfredo Gomez
Welterweight	**Bantamweight**
Ray Leonard	Jeff Chandler
Junior Welterweight	**Flyweight**
Aaron Pryor	Antonio Avelar

"Round Of The Year" by Dean Coleman came with an unusual twist, as it was won in a bout between a pair of fighters that were neither contenders nor titleholders. Since THE RING instituted Round of the Year in 1945, every previous choice involved a rated world-class fighter. Not so in 1981, when the prize went to the fifth round of the William "Caveman" Lee-Johnny LoCicero middleweight brawl. Lee toppled LoCicero, who got up and fought back so effectively he soon had Lee in trouble. And just as suddenly, Lee came roaring back to stop LoCicero at 2:54 of the fifth. Lee fought just four more times after beating LoCicero, including a first-round kayo loss to world middleweight champion Marvin Hagler. LoCicero, ironically, also fought four more times, going 1-3 in his last four bouts. ■

"Fight Of The Year" by Herbert G. Goldman delves into a fight that exceeded all the hype—Leonard's 14-round demolition of Hearns. It was an epic contest that underwent several role reversals, with Hearns outboxing Leonard early. Then Leonard, sporting a badly swollen left eye, came back from a scorecard deficit to stop Hearns with 1:45 left in the 14th. "The action, to be sure, was not continuously great, but, in terms of pure drama, the shifting tides of battle, the tension, and, not too infrequently, the terrific action, it was more than a great fight," writes Goldman.

Sanchez' destruction of unbeaten Gomez was the runner-up choice, though it was a one-sided fight.

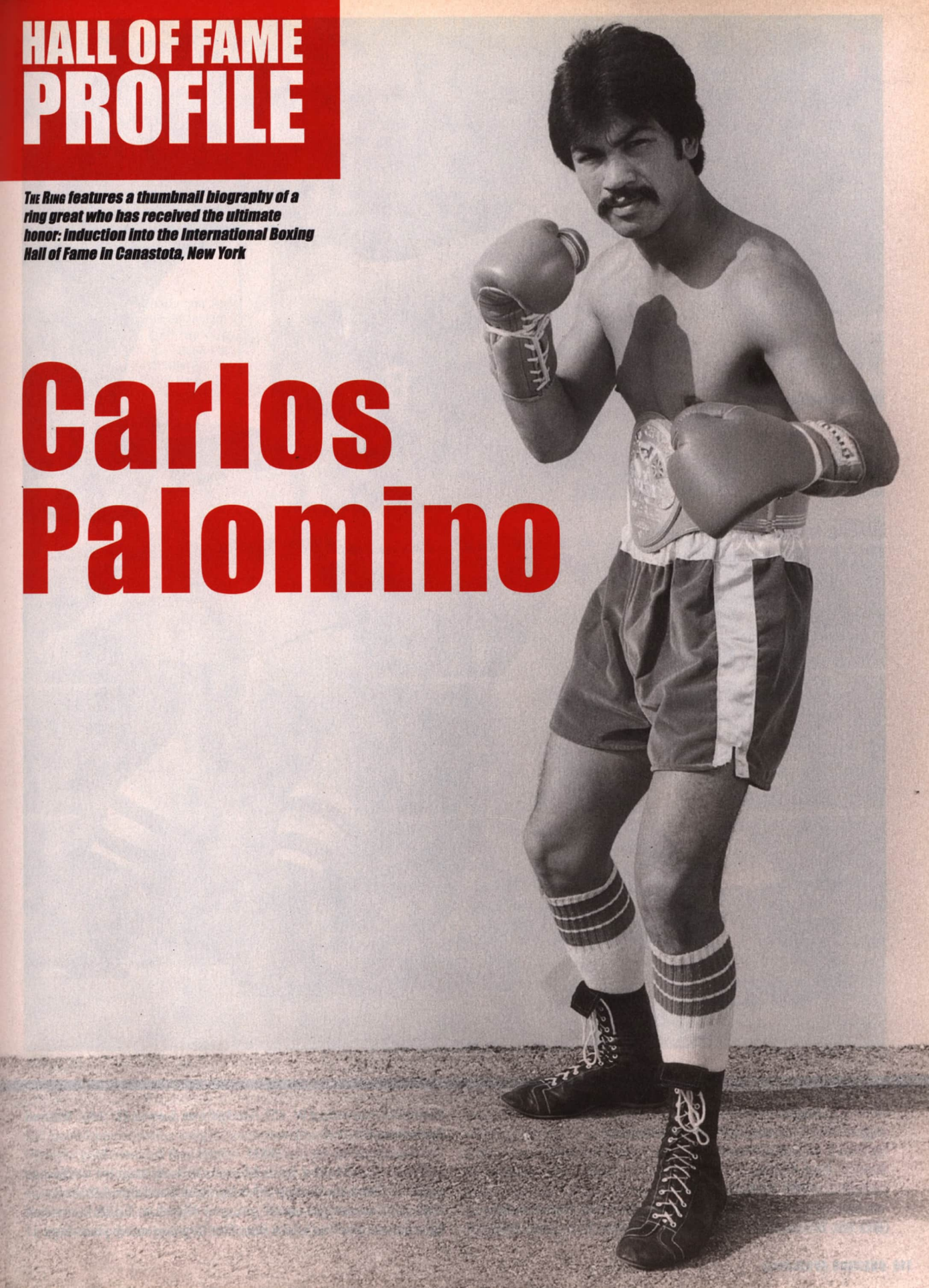


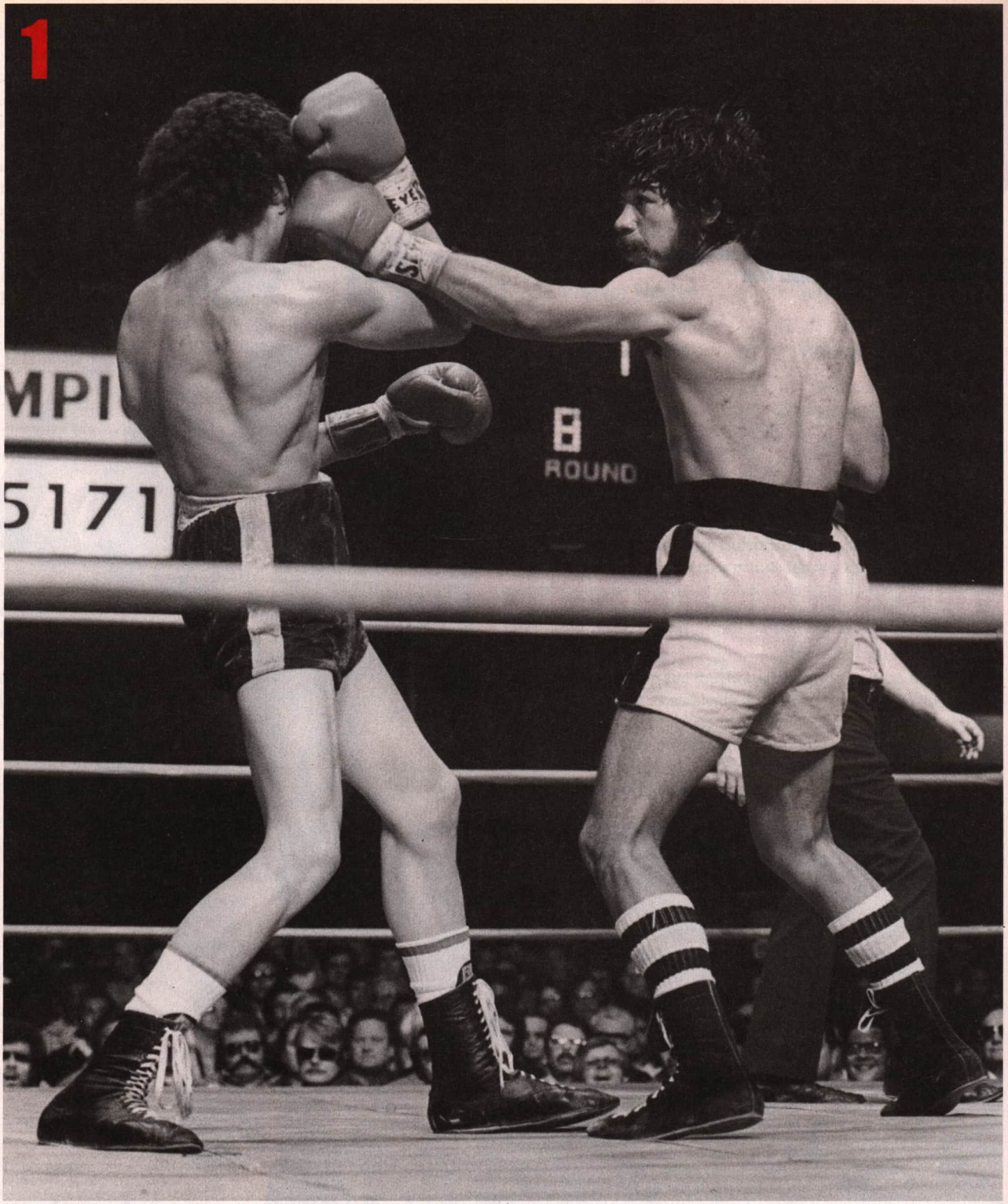
SUPERSTARS COLLIDE
Leonard slams a left hook to the head of Hearns en route to a TKO victory that earned Sugar Ray Fighter of the Year honors and the match itself Fight of the Year.

HALL OF FAME PROFILE

The Ring features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

Carlos Palomino



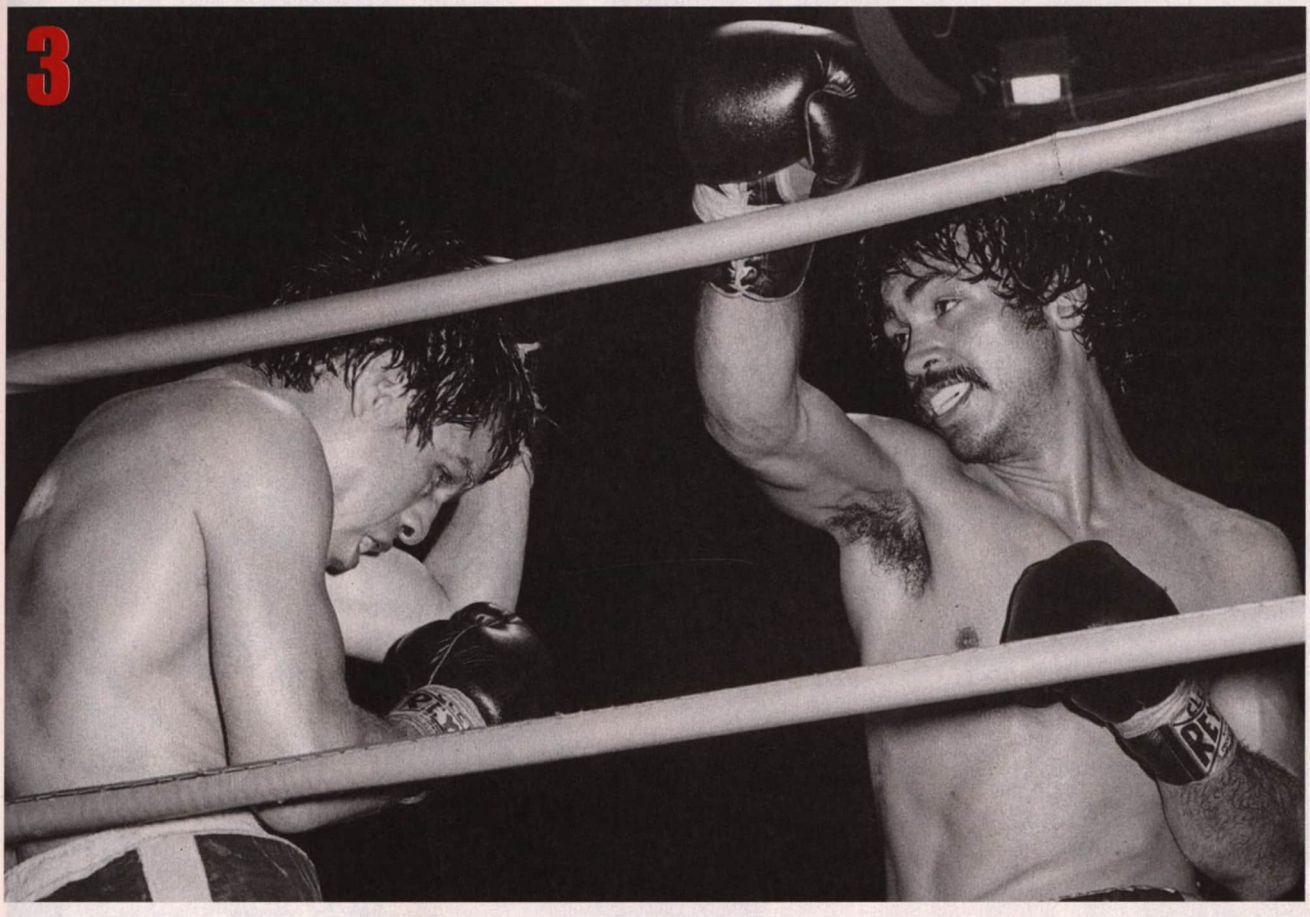


Bithdate: August 10, 1949
Birthplace: San Luis Rio Colorado, Mexico
Weight Class: Welterweight
Record: 31-4-3 (19)
Title Held: WBC Welterweight
Best Performances: John H. Stacey (KO 12), Armando Muniz (KO 15, W 15), Dave Green (KO 11), Ryu Sorimachi (KO 7), Everaldo Azevedo (W 15), Hedgemon Lewis (D 15), Wilfred Benitez (L 15)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 2004
Background: Moved from Mexico to Los Angeles at the age of 10 … Took up boxing after being drafted into US Army … "My goal was to get out of going to Vietnam. I didn't envision fighting as a pro" he told writer Tim Graham many years later …

1. ERASING A BLEMISH
Palomino tags Zovek Barajas with a left. A month prior, Barajas held him to a 10-round draw, but, in the rematch, Palomino scored a ninth-round TKO.

2. WINNING THE TITLE
Palomino blasts John H. Stracey into the ropes during the final flurry that forced referee Sid Nathan to stop the fight in the 12th round and award Palomino the WBC welterweight belt.

3. HIS TOUGHEST FIGHT
Palomino has challenger Armando Muniz covering up during the first of their two title fights. They were even on the cards when Palomino finally overwhelmed Muniz for a TKO victory in the 15th round.



Became Army champion in 1971 and '72 … Also won 1972 AAU 137-pound junior welterweight championship, defeating eventual Olympic gold medalist Ray Seales … Turned pro in September '72 to bankroll his college education, winning a four-round decision over Javier Martinez at Los Angles' Olympic Auditorium, a venue that hosted 25 of his 38 pro bouts … Went undefeated in his first 11 fights before dropping a 10-round decision to Andy Price in August '74 … Held to a draw by Zovek Barajas in February '75 but stopped Barajas in a rematch the following month … Also fought a 10-round draw with the highly regarded Hedgemon Lewis in November '75 … Won the WBC welterweight title, as a 10-to-1 underdog, by beating John H. Stracey in June '76 in London, England … Scored two knockdowns en route to stopping the Englishman in the 12th round … Made seven successful defenses

PHOTO BY ABC PHOTO ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

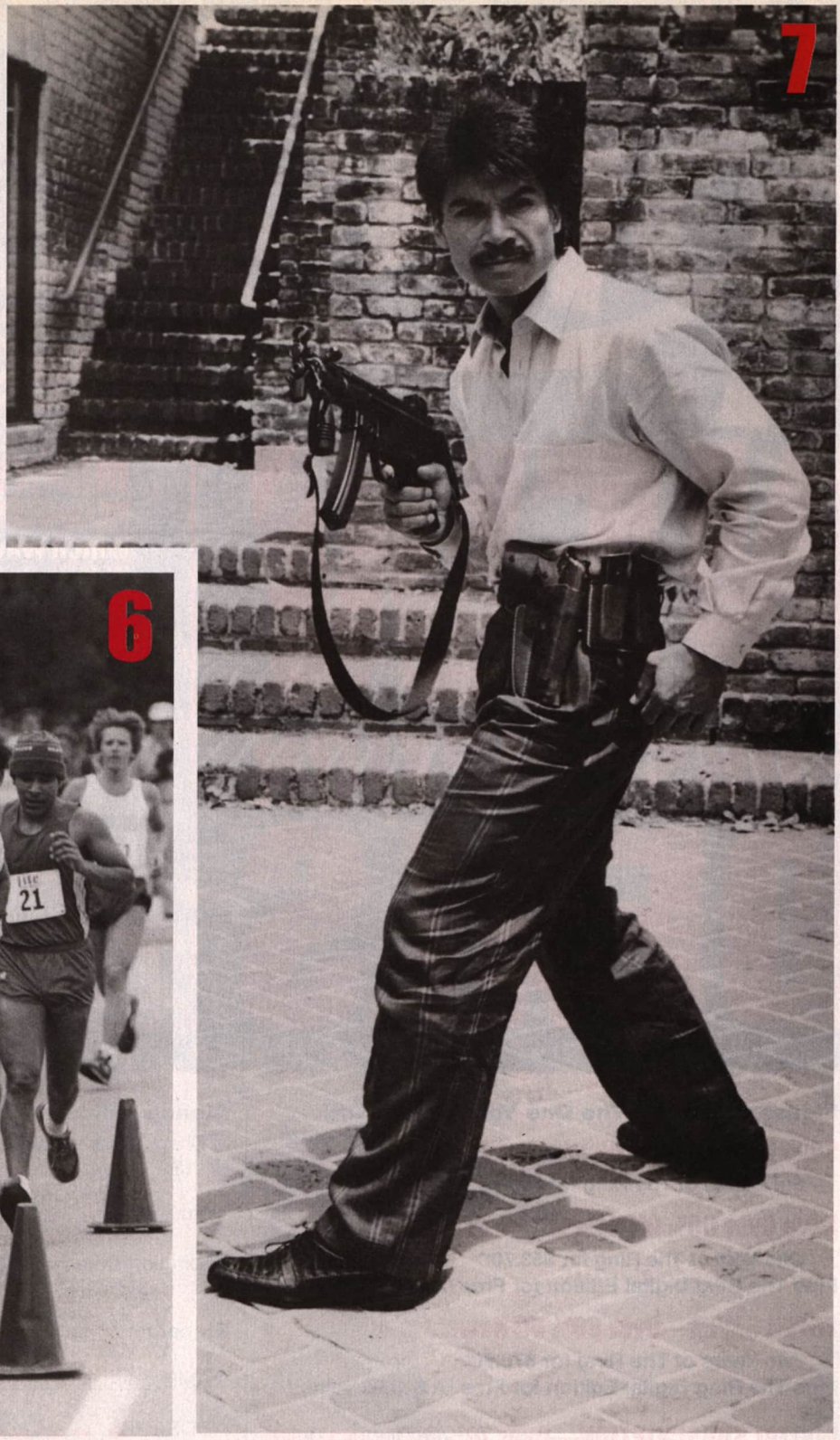
of the WBC belt, including two against local rival Armando Muniz … The first of which was one of 1977's best fights … The first Muniz bout was even on the scorecards going into the 15th and final round … "I went out and just threw everything I had for 2½ minutes," said Palomino. "Finally, he went down" … Lost title to undefeated Wilfred Benitez in Puerto Rico on January 14, 1979, via controversial split decision … This was followed by a 10-round decision loss to Roberto Duran at Madison Square Garden in June '79, after which Palomino retired … He had earned a degree in recreational administration from Long Beach State, but he turned to acting after he hung up his gloves … Was featured in Miller Lite's "Tastes Great, Less Filling" TV commercials, working with the likes

4. CHAMP IN THE MIDDLE
Palomino poses at an awards dinner in which he was honored, along with co-managers Noe Cruz and Jackie McCoy (left), promoter Aileen Eaton, referee Rudy Jordan, and Don King.

5. CATCHING THE ACTING BUG
One of Palomino's first acting jobs was an appearance on *Taxi* in 1978, along with actor Judd Hirsch and boxer-turned-actor Tony Danza. The first-season episode was called "One-Punch Banta."

6. STILL IN GREAT SHAPE
Palomino is pictured at around the 14-mile mark during the 1982 Miller Lite Marathon.

7. ARMED AND DANGEROUS
Palomino poses for a publicity photo for the 1991 movie, *Fists Of Steel*, in which he received top billing.



of Walt Frazier, Bubba Smith, Dick Butkus, Billy Martin, Boog Powell, and Rodney Dangerfield … His signature line was "Don't drink the water," which some fans still yell out when they see him … Appeared in a number of movies, including *Geronimo*, *Jungle Heat*, *Die Watching*, *Fists Of Steel*, *Rampage*, and *Time Bomb* … Also made guest appearances in TV series such as *Taxi*, *White Shadow*, *Knight Rider*, *Hill Street Blues*, and *NYPD Blue* … In 1997, 17½ years after the Duran fight, he returned to the ring for five more bouts at the age of 47, winning the first four via knockout … Then, in a test to see exactly how much he had left, Top Rank matched him with welterweight contender Wilfredo Rivera, who won a 10-round decision and sent the ex-champ back into retirement. ■

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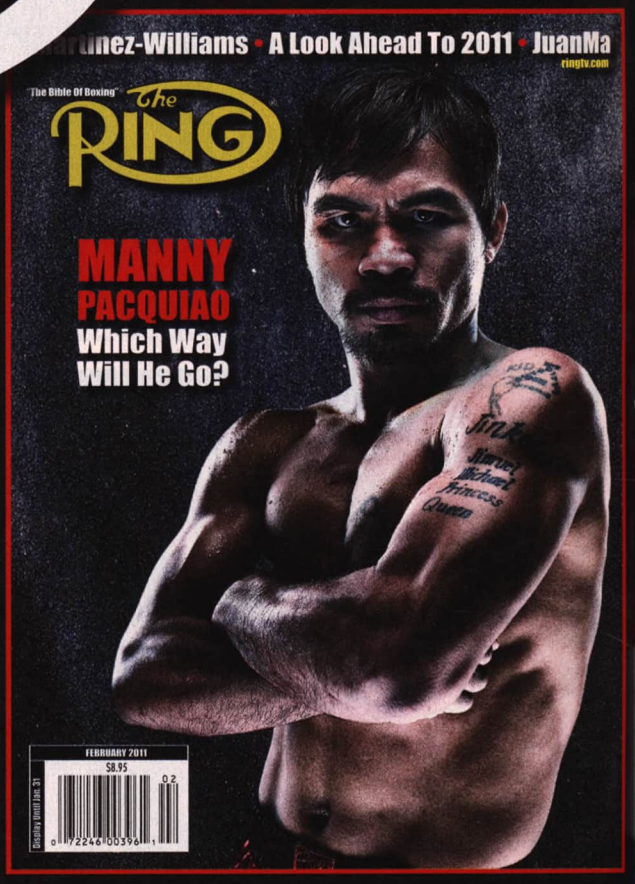

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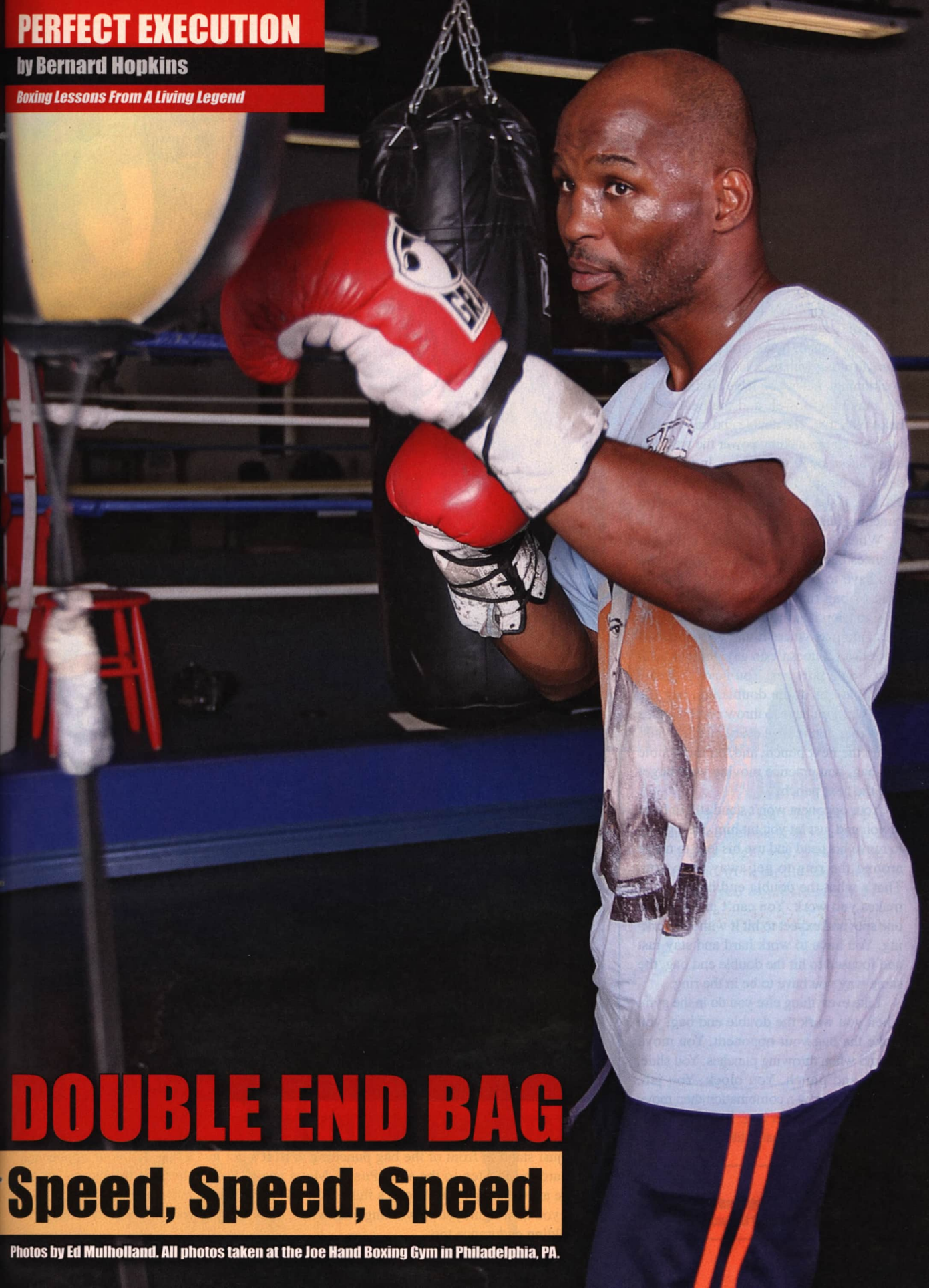
PERFECT EXECUTION

by Bernard Hopkins

Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend



DOUBLE END BAG

Speed, Speed, Speed

Photos by Ed Mulholland. All photos taken at the Joe Hand Boxing Gym in Philadelphia, PA.

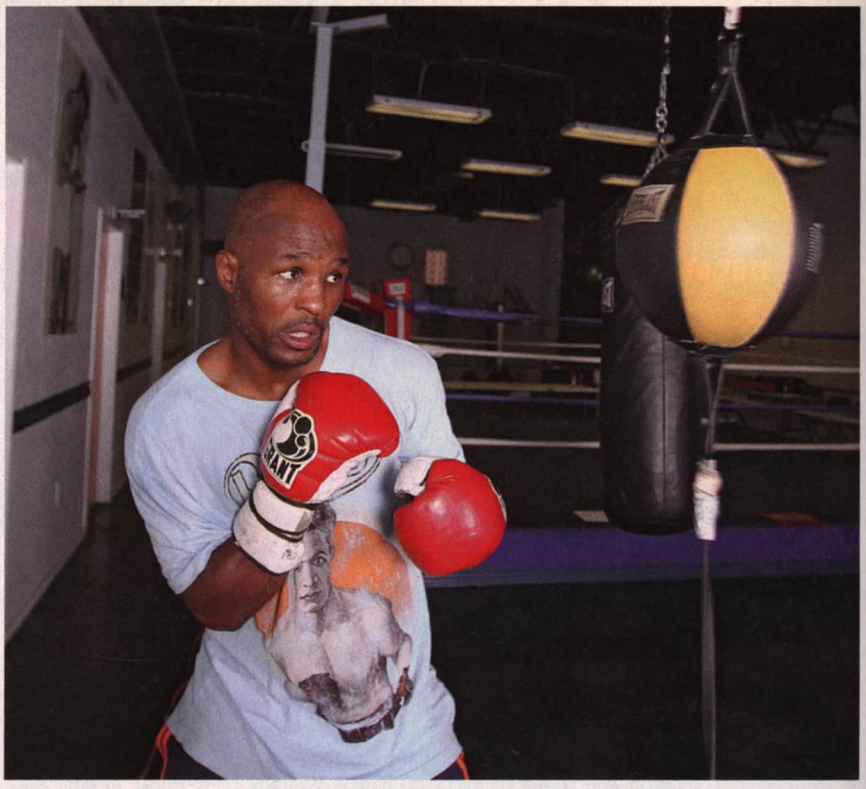
In the last lesson, we went over working the heavy bag, which is for punching power and endurance, and that doesn't mean strength; it means strength along with balance, technique, and positioning. When you have all those, you get punching power, and the heavy bag helps with that. The double end bag doesn't increase your punching power the way you think about punching power. In fact, you never hit it hard. That's not what the double end bag is for. It's for speed, combination punching, and defense.

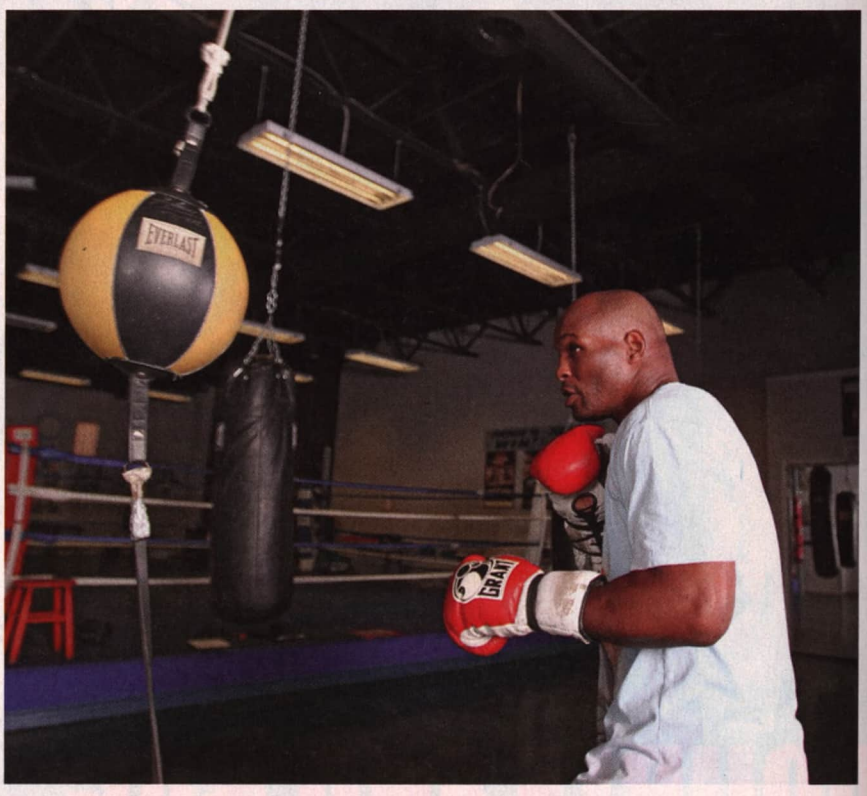
When you hit the double end bag, it bounces back at you at crazy angles, and you have to be ready for it; it's the only kind of bag that can hit you back. You have to keep it at the end of your punches and anticipate where it will go and punch there. And it doesn't do any good to hit it with single punches. You have to throw combinations at the double end bag the same way you have to throw combinations in the ring. In the ring, every punch should set up the next punch, and, on the double end bag, you practice moving your target into the next punch.

Your opponent won't stand still in front of you and just let you hit him. He's going to move his head and use his legs to move around the ring to get away from you. That's what the double end bag does. It makes you work. You can't just stand in one spot and expect to hit it without working. You have to work hard and stay fast and focused to hit the double end bag, the same way you have to be in the ring.

Like everything else you do in the gym, when you work the double end bag, you make the bag your opponent. You move around when throwing punches. You slide, pivot, and punch. You block. You jab, move, and throw a combination then move again. It's not just a bag. It's your opponent. You have to treat it like one.

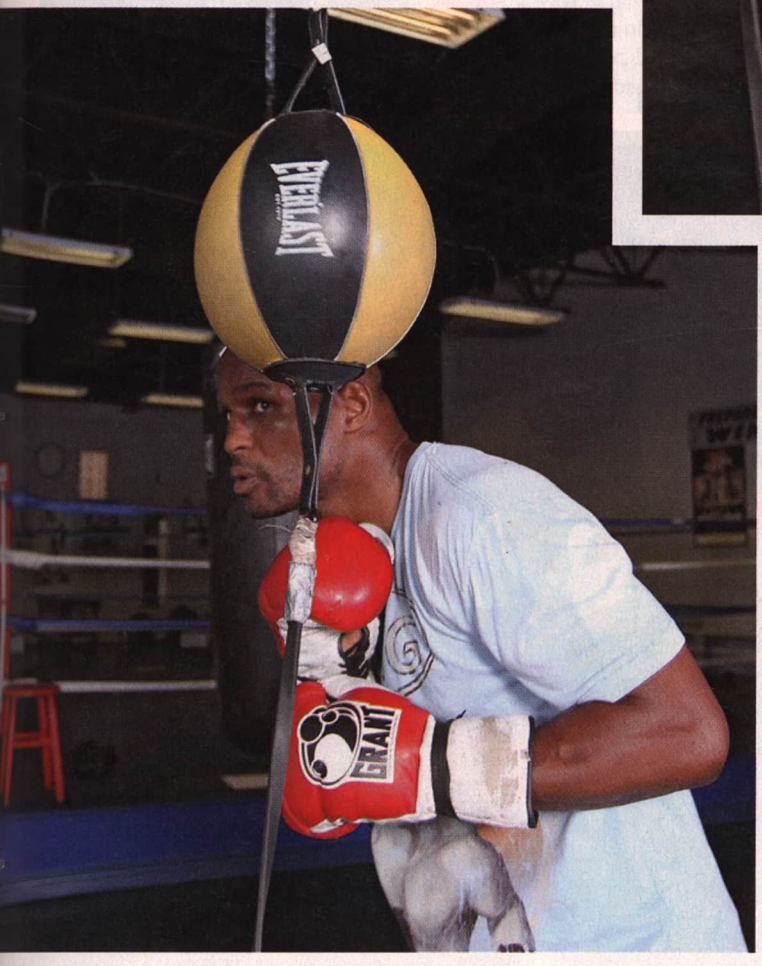
BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

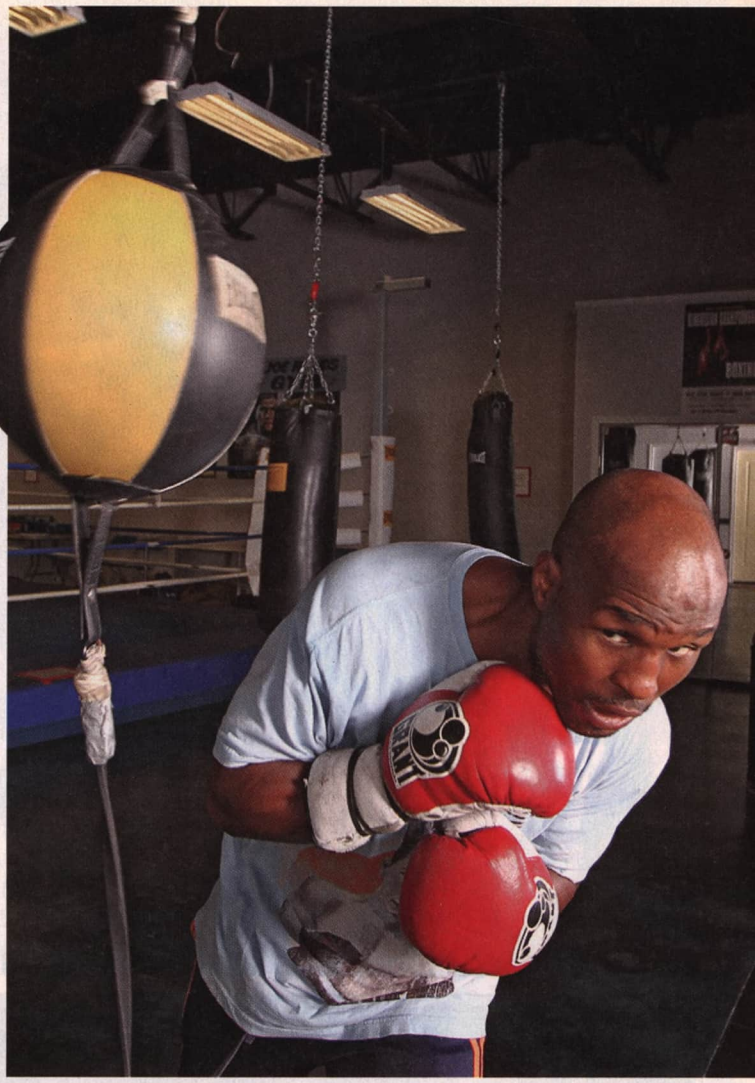




TREAT IT LIKE AN OPPONENT

Don't just stand in front of the bag punching at it. It's not just a bag. It's your opponent. Move around it. Step to the side. Punch. Move again. Remember, the things you do in practice are the things you'll do in a fight. Don't be lazy. Get the most out of the double end bag. If you do it right, you're working your whole body, not just your upper body. Your legs are building endurance too.



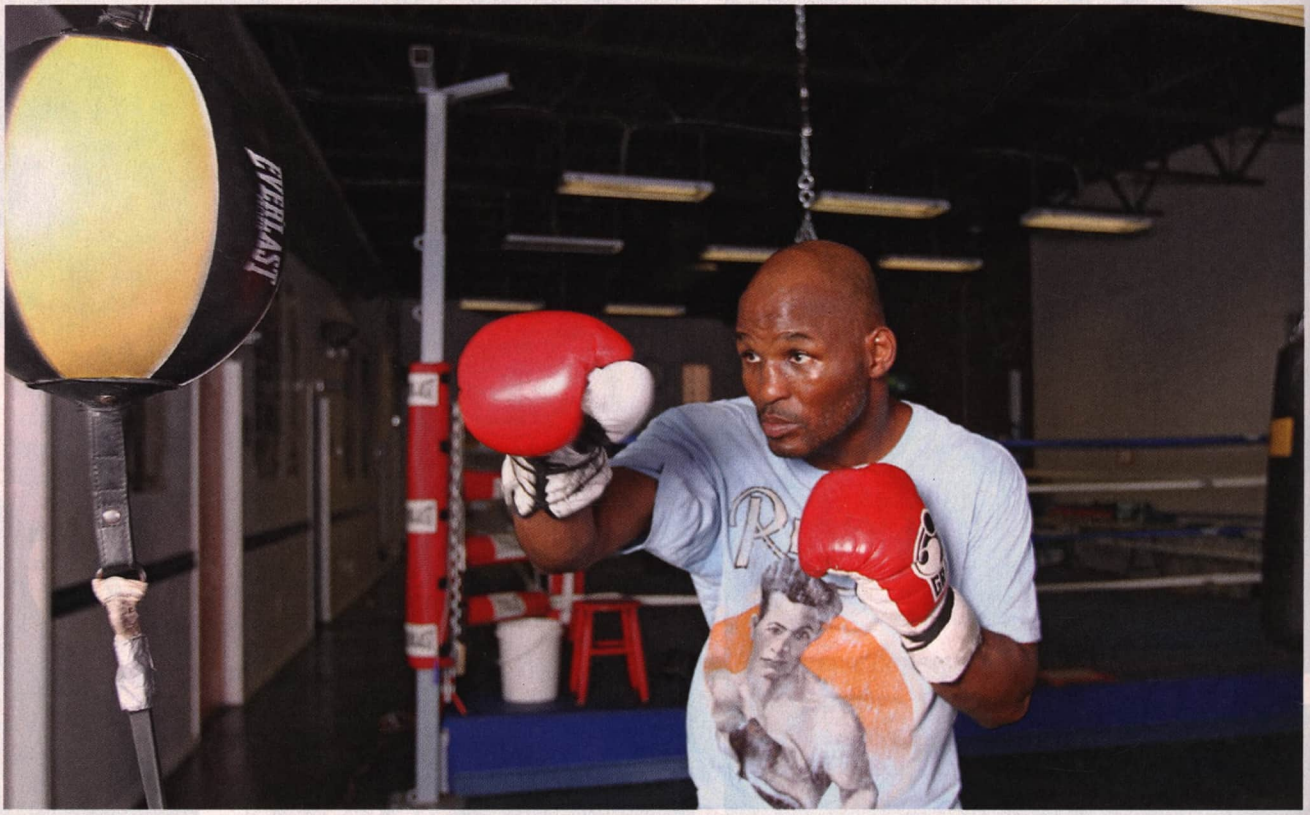


IT'S NOT JUST FOR OFFENSE

Remember, the double end bag isn't the heavy bag. It can hit you back, and it comes back at you fast. Your job is to make sure it doesn't get you. So after you hit it, get those gloves up and work on blocking and slipping the counters just like you would do in a fight.

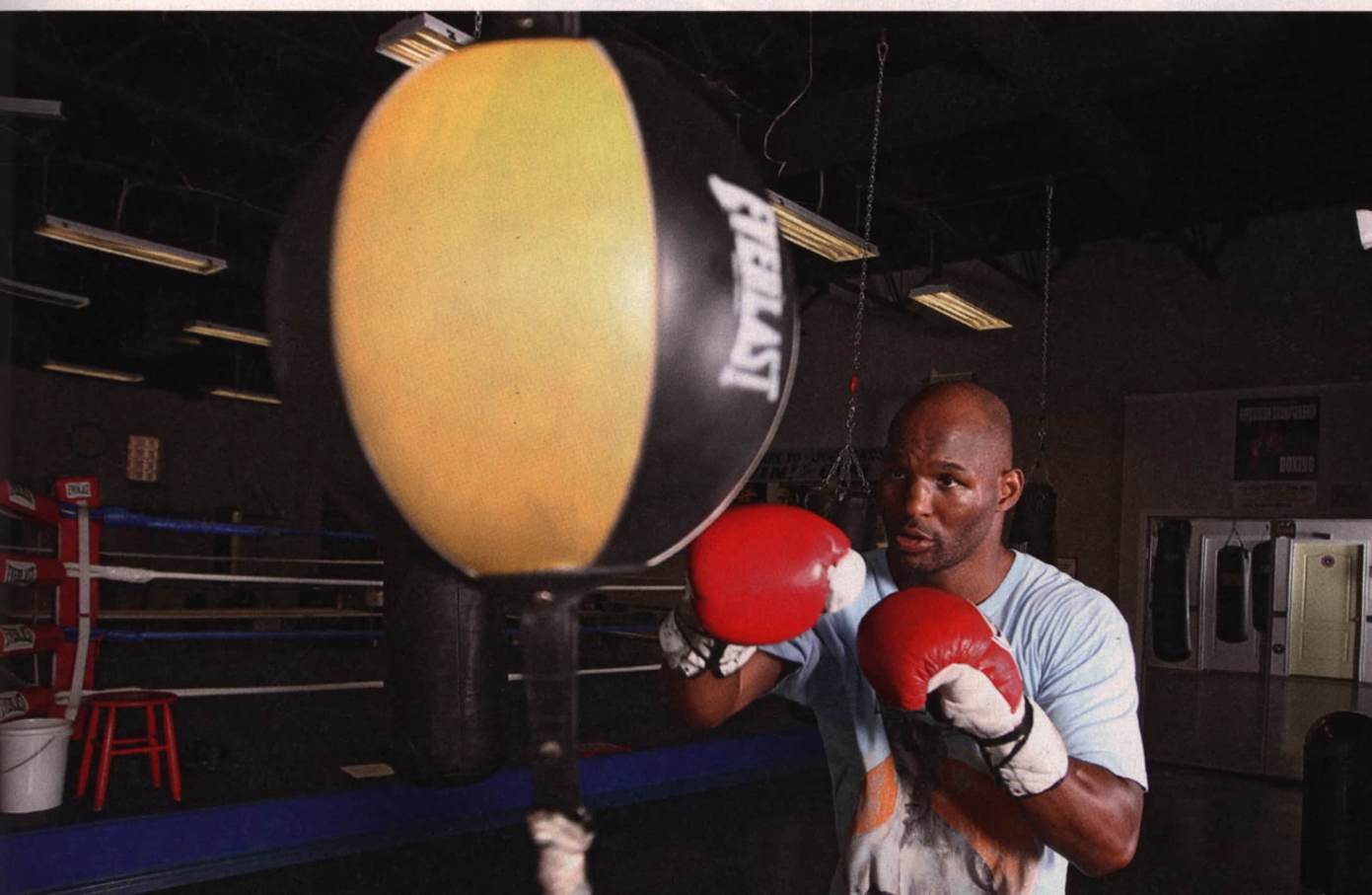
REMEMBER YOUR FORM

You don't let your form go just because you're hitting a bag and not a real opponent. Technique and positioning are everything. I'm throwing this jab and right hand the same way I would in a fight. My hands are up, my chin is down, eyes straight ahead and on balance. Pay attention to your form no matter what you're doing.



COMBINATIONS, COMBINATIONS, COMBINATIONS

The double end bag sharpens up your combination punching. You're doing nothing if all you do is throw single punches at it. You've got to work combinations on the double end bag if you want to have the speed, balance, and endurance in the ring that you'll need to throw combinations for as long as the fight lasts. Look at the video of my fight with Jean Pascal. How many times did I throw one punch and then stop? Almost never! It was always right-hand, left hook. Left-uppercut, right-hand. Left-jab, right-hand, left-hook. Combinations, body and head, and always moving. Do it on the double end bag and you'll do it in the fight.



AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

By Michael Rivest

MISTER INTENSITY
Pedro Sosa: Heading to the 2012 Olympic Trials

Motivation Above And Beyond Just Winning

Intensity. The word means different things depending on whether you're talking about light bulbs or earthquakes. In each of those, it's determined by formulas so complicated they could make your hair hurt.

But intensity applies to great athletes, too, and the formula there is easy: hunger + patience = intensity, the fire within harnessed by composure. And it's one reason why 18-year-old, 141-pound Pedro Sosa may just wind up on the 2012 US Olympic Team.

"Pedro has a hunger like I've never seen," said Anthony Chase, the USA Boxing Coach who led Pedro and the

Photos by Ruben Roncallo

US National Team on its European tour last fall. "And that hunger is always under control. He's patient. He has the maturity to wait for the right time for everything. He's very intense."

Sosa has a string of championships so long that if we listed all of them here, there would be no space to talk about much else. In 2010 alone, he won the US Nationals and then the National PAL Championship for the second consecutive year, securing a berth in the 2012 Olympic Trials this July.

Marcos Suarez, Sosa's trainer from the beginning, remembers the day the skinny 10-year old first walked into the Webster PAL Gym in the South Bronx. "I didn't see anything special," Suarez said. "He was quiet, almost distant, but unbelievably dedicated. It was like he was there to do something important."

Yet there's something about intensity that isn't captured in our simple formula. What intensity is doesn't explain why it is. What makes certain people so "hungry" in the first place? And where does an 18-year-old kid get that level of mature patience?

Sosa has a few thoughts on that, but first, some history.

His family moved to the Bronx from the Dominican Republic in 2002. Life in their home country was hard.

"We were very poor, and there was lots of crime," said Sosa, "Ten of us lived in a small house. My father had always wanted me to be a baseball player, not a boxer. But my grandmother knew I loved it, so, one time, while we were still in the Dominican Republic, without telling my father, she took me to a fight, and I knew then that I'd be doing it my whole life."

Needless to say, after witnessing what his son has done with his dream, Pedro Sr.'s preference for baseball has faded. "I am very, very proud," he said.

But Sosa's memories of life in his native land are tinged with tragedy. Something happened there that he rarely talks about. "It's something he keeps inside," Coach Suarez said. It was only after several conversations and relentless questioning about why he feels the hunger that he does that Pedro Sosa opened his fighter's heart.

His older brother, Andy, was murdered in 2000. The experience left an indelible mark on the younger brother who worshiped him.

"I take my brother into the ring with me—every time," Sosa said, his voice evincing a sudden darkness. "I have a lot of anger about what happened to my brother. I'm not an angry person. It's just something that's inside of me and in my control. I let it out when I want to, which is only in the ring."

"Pedro is different from the other kids in the gym," observed Dorly Ninio, a filmmaker who spent the better part of 2008-'09 in the Bronx's Longwood PAL Academy, where Sosa and Suarez were training, as she filmed *Right To Fight*, now in post-production.

"He's without a shred of vanity," she said. "After he wins, you won't find him in the back row cracking jokes. He'll just sit calmly watching the rest of the fights like nothing happened.

"Just as he doesn't gloat when he wins, he won't complain if he loses," Ninio continued. "It doesn't seem like humility either. It's as though he's listening to something in himself, a voice telling him he's doing this for a higher reason, and it doesn't appear to have anything to do with ego, either. He's very, I don't know, patient."

There's that word again—patience—the other factor in our intensity formula.

"That's from my parents. They taught me to be calm and wait patiently, not just with boxing, but with life," said Sosa, revealing a maturity not found in a whole lot of people, regardless of age. "And not just because they want me to be patient. They taught me that if God does not give you what you want, there's always a reason. Patience is your responsibility; you owe it to God. It's what God expects from you.

"I want to someday get for my parents the things they never had," he added. "Boxing will help me do that, but only if it's meant to be. I can't make it happen; I can only do what I can do."

CAB DRIVING HERO

Our cultural understanding of what constitutes a hero has become about as representative of the real thing as does your reflection in a beveled mirror. The media would have us believe heroes are larger than life celebrities with adoring fans and fat bank accounts.

Pedro Sosa doesn't have that problem. When asked whom he would like to be the subject of this sidebar section of this column column, his answer was immediate: "My father."

"Marcos Suarez is my coach, and I owe what I know about boxing to him. But my father has made it all possible," Sosa added. "He's my best friend."

To young Pedro, Pedro Sr. is a hero—the real kind. The kind who drives a cab 10-hours a day, seven days a week so that his son can follow his dream, while still managing to get to the gym to wrap his son's hands and watch his workouts.

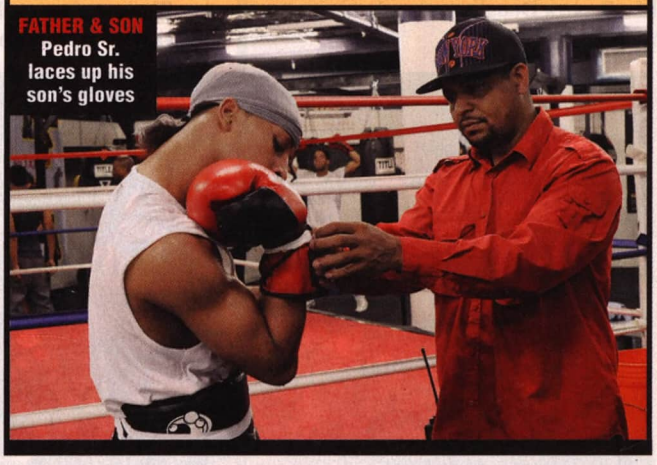
So, Pedro Sr., what about the fact that your son credits you and his mom with so much of his success?

"We tried to give him discipline as a kid," he said, with young Pedro, interpreting. The laughter they shared before the translated answer arrived spoke volumes about the close relationship they enjoy.

"We taught him to be calm, to trust in the fact that what happens is for the good," he added.

What about your dream that young Pedro would be a baseball player, not a boxer? How disappointed are you? Some quick Spanish was followed by more laughter.

"Oh, no disappointment," said Pedro Sr. "No disappointment."



FATHER & SON Pedro Sr. laces up his son's gloves

COMING EVENTS

World Series of Boxing Wraps-up its First Season

March 11: Los Angeles vs. Mexico City, Nokia Theater (Los Angeles, CA)
March 12: Memphis vs. Miami, Desoto Civic Center (Southaven, MS)
March 17: Miami vs. Los Angeles, American Airlines Arena (Miami, FL)
March 18: Mexico City vs. Memphis, World Trade Center (Mexico City, MX)

Ninio is right. Pedro Sosa is different. But when you look beneath the surface, aren't all champions? They seem to need, as basketball's Pat Riley once observed, "a motivation above and beyond just winning."

To Pedro Sosa, Olympic Gold is already his. He just needs to bring the fire. The rest is patience. ■

Michael Rivest can be reached at mrivest12@gmail.com.

by Mike Coppinger

Junior Middleweight Denis Douglin

Denis Douglin came out of the corner, fighting as a professional for the first time, fittingly making his debut in his native New York—at the Roseland Ballroom to be exact. He immediately charged towards his counterpart, Roberto Irrizarry, shooting power punches from his southpaw stance. And he didn't let up.

He pinned his overmatched opponent against the ropes and let his hands go, as Irrizarry kept his guard up, hoping Douglin would tire. He didn't. Referee Steve Smoger, known for being lenient when it comes to stopping fights, watched as Douglin continued to deliver punishment. Finally, at 1:45 of the opening frame, Irrizarry dropped, and Smoger called a halt to the bout, giving Douglin a TKO victory in his pro debut.

Douglin went over and embraced with a familiar face, giving his mother a kiss and a big hug, celebrating a seminal moment in his life. Saphya Douglin isn't only his mother—she's also his trainer.

Growing up in Brooklyn, Denis, eight-years-old at the time, got into a school fight, one in which he didn't do too well. His mother, training as an amateur boxer herself at the now defunct Rivera Boxing Gym in New York, wanted her son to be able to defend himself and started bringing him along.

Since then, the unique parent-child duo has flourished, as Douglin has run his record to 12-0 (8) while campaigning at middleweight and junior middleweight. And unlike many pugilists who are trained by their parent, the Douglins don't envision complications stemming from their relationship.

"She knows how to turn 'mom' off, how to turn 'coach' off, so it works out," said Denis, who now resides in Marlboro, New Jersey. "I think that's why father and son relationships don't work out that well, because they're trying to be the father in the gym and the coach. You can't be both at the same time."

Their professional relationship wasn't always this way though. In such a violent sport as boxing, it's no surprise that at one point Denis was uneasy with the idea of being trained by his mother.

"Originally, it was harder because I didn't want people to know that my mom was training me," said Denis, whose cousin Delen Parsley, 4-0 (2), is also a pro boxer fighting out of Brooklyn. "She used to train me in private. We used to train at home, and I would let my uncle work my corner. But once I became a little more mature and I realized it didn't make a difference, I actually liked the attention that it brought to me.

"She's mean in the gym. She yells. She slaps me in the corner. She's intense, and I feed off her energy. She knows how to get certain emotions out of me. She can make me furious in the ring, and she can make me laugh in the ring. She knows exactly what buttons to push."

Saphya, an accountant by day, commutes almost two hours from her job in Brooklyn each night to train Denis at the family gym,

MOTHER & SON
Denis and Saphya Douglin

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

PRO RECORD

2009		
Feb. 13	Roberto Irrizarry, New York, NY	KO 1
May 7	Gilbert Johnson, North Bergen, NJ	KO 1
June 5	Vernon Richardson, Westbury, NY	W 4
June 20	Michael Rayner, Columbia, SC	KO 1
July 11	Lamar Harris, Newark, NJ	W 4
Sept. 18	Rondu Campbell, Yonkers, NY	W 4
2010		
Feb. 6	Eddie Hunter, Newark, NJ	W 6
March 31	Chad Greenleaf, New York	KO 1
May 15	Joshua Onyango, New York	KO 2
July 16	Marteze Logan, Southaven, MS	KO 5
Oct. 6	Orphius Waite, New York	KO 1
Dec. 17	Matt Berkshire, Monroeville, PA	KO 1

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
12	12	0	0	8

New Breed Boxing & Fitness in Freehold, New Jersey.

"He feels like when he comes to the corner, he's going home. He's comfortable," said Saphya, who works her son's corner in high heels. "I know how to get into his head. I know how to motivate him. I know everything about him. So it makes it really easy for me."

Aptly nicknamed "Da Momma's Boy," Denis was a decorated amateur, winning the National Golden Gloves at middleweight in 2008. He was poised to make a run at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, but a horrible car accident resulted in severe injuries, including a broken bone in his neck, which prevented his participation in the trials. Doctors informed Denis that if he had broken a different bone in his neck, he would have been paralyzed.

On the mend for over a year, Denis returned to the gym rejuvenated.

"It gave me a new focus. It made me realize how much I truly care about boxing," said the 5' 8½" boxer-puncher. "When I was out of the gym, I was miserable."

Denis, who recently hooked up with powerful advisor Al Haymon and is currently without a promoter, plans to stay active in 2011 before making a push for the bigger fights in 2012. But with national exposure, critics follow.

"I know I'm going to face all kinds of scrutiny, but I'm ready for it now," said Saphya. "I used to doubt myself a lot, and he [Denis] used to always encourage me not to. He told me I have to have confidence in myself, and I do now."

Denis, too, is ready for the doubters.

"We know that's gonna happen, but we don't care," said Denis, who lists fellow southpaw Pernell Whitaker as an influence. "What we're doing works. I keep getting better. I keep improving. There's no reason to change the formula if it's working. If we ever get to the point where we feel like I've plateaued and there's nothing else she can teach me, then we'll bring in another coach to help out, but she'll always be my coach."

And while it is his mother who trains him, his father David, a boxing fan himself, plays an integral role in their lives, supporting the pair in their fistic endeavors.

The affable 22-year-old is already planning his future after boxing, just six credits shy of an associate's degree in teaching. Upon obtaining that degree, he plans to take some time off to fully focus on boxing, before eventually attending Rutgers University with an eye on eventually teaching history. But for now, Denis is solely concentrating on improving at his craft.

It may be work to some fighters, but Denis truly enjoys the Sweet Science.

"You hear a lot of stories about inner-city fighters and how poverty drives them, but I just have a true love for boxing," said Denis, who trained most of his career at the famed Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn. "I've never felt so deeply about anything, it's kinda scary. I just want to be the best. I love doing what I do, and I want to go down in the history books.

"When you start moving up into the better caliber of fighters, there's going to be fighters that are just as good as you. Then it comes down to who wants it more. I know that nobody wants it more than me, and I want to prove that."

If one thing is certain, this isn't your average momma's boy. ■

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For Better Or For Worse?

Despite the lack of federal oversight, boxing regulations have changed over the last 50 years in an effort to advance safety. The question remains as to whether or not any have prevented injuries, including acute and chronic brain damage.

Rescinding The Standing Eight Count: "The standing 8-count was a joke," noted the Pennsylvania Athletic Commission Executive Director Greg Sirb. "When I studied the issue, over 75 percent of the fighters who received a standing-8 were later knocked out or received a TKO. The standing-8 only prolongs the inevitable." Former Nevada commissioner, Dr. Flip Homansky agreed, "Once the fighter loses the ability to protect himself, the athlete needs to be protected by the referee. A standing-8 makes no sense. You are giving a concussed fighter more time to be re-concussed?"

Very few jurisdictions still employ a standing-8. Inexperienced or poorly trained referees who didn't know when to halt a fight overused it. Its elimination is one area where boxing has superseded other sports' safety regulations—like the NFL, who is finally recognizing the dangers in allowing a concussed athlete to continue playing.

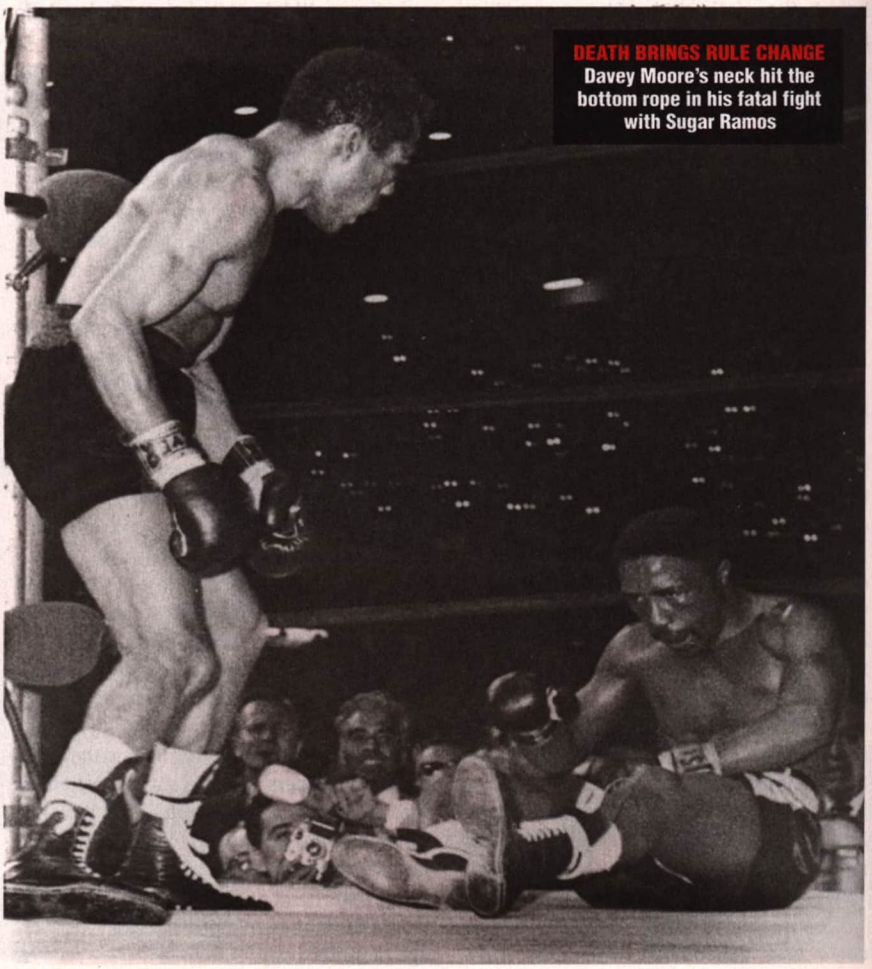
Fourth Ring Rope: Boxing historian Bert Sugar said, "An extra rope was added after the 1961 featherweight championship between Davey Moore and Sugar Ramos." Moore was knocked out on national television. As he fell backwards, the back of his neck struck the bottom ring rope killing him from a brainstem injury. According to Sirb, "The extra rope is a great protection for the fighters. The lower rope—always the most loose, cushions head falls, and the top rope, always the tightest, keeps the fighter in the ring."

HIV/Hepatitis Screens: Hepatitis screens were first instituted in the early 1990s by the New York State Athletic Commission at the behest of then chief medical director, Dr. William Lathan (spouse of New York's current Chief Commissioner). Nevada soon adopted HIV screens, a few years before Tommy Morrison was found to be HIV positive. Although several US commissions still conduct little or no prefight medical testing, HIV/hepatitis B and C screens have become widely accepted. Boxing has been and will always be a blood sport. There is no way to argue that athletes, officials, and those sitting ringside should not be protected from contracting potentially lethal blood-borne diseases.

Reducing Title Fights To 12 Rounds: In 1982, Duk Koo Kim fought Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini outdoors at Las Vegas' Caesar's Palace for the WBA lightweight title. Kim had considerable difficulty making weight. At that time, all championship fights were 15 rounds. By the 13th round, Kim had absorbed considerable punishing blows but rallied at the end of the round, so referee, Richard Green, did not stop the fight. Soon after the start of the 14th round, the onslaught continued, prompting Green to intercede. Kim soon collapsed into a coma and died four days later.

At the 1982 WBC convention, Homansky, then Nevada's chief physician, and others argued for the round reduction in championship fights. Their reasoning was based on how dehydration in the latter rounds was a recurring factor implicated in ring death. Nevada, as well as other commissions and sanctioning organizations quickly followed suit.

Sugar, co-author of the newly released book entitled, *The Ultimate Book of Boxing Lists*, believes good and bad has come from lowering championship fights to 12 rounds. "In my new book, I discuss fights that would have had a different result if fought for fewer rounds. I believe that this change took away the championship rounds." Sugar makes an



DEATH BRINGS RULE CHANGE
Davey Moore's neck hit the bottom rope in his fatal fight with Sugar Ramos

UNFAIR ADVANTAGE
Rios gained 16 pounds between the weigh-in and his supposed lightweight fight against Anthony Peterson

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

excellent point that boxing is the least researched sport and that too often knee-jerk responses force rule changes that may not benefit athlete safety.

Federal ID Cards: Every professional boxer is required by law to have a federal identification card. It is renewed on a yearly basis and must be presented to a commission for licensing. Prior to its existence, boxers could compete under false names or falsify their records. "The federal ID card has had the greatest positive impact on boxing than anything in the past 20 years," said Sirb. "With this ID, we have cleaned up well over a thousand boxing records." By proving an athlete's identity, we can make certain a boxer is not fighting on suspension, especially when suffering from a serious medical condition.

FightFax: Is the official recordkeeping system used by commissions that should be included in advancements. FightFax automatically lists any boxer with a federal ID. This enables commissions to review a boxer's wins, losses, suspensions, and medical issues that might otherwise be missed. Under federal law, a commission must honor a medical suspension given by another regulatory body. But you can't honor a suspension if you don't know it exists. FightFax supplies commissions with this data to prevent boxers from sneaking through the cracks.

Day Before Fight Weigh-ins: More than any other change in the last 50 years, moving weigh-ins to 24-hours before a bout continues to be debated. It was aimed at giving a fighter sufficient time to re-hydrate after making weight. Many argue the main rationale was to have televised weigh-ins drum up fan interest and pay-per-view buys.

Many still believe it prevents boxers from becoming seriously dehydrated and risking brain injury from slowed reflexes secondary to fluid loss. Unfortunately over time, this once well-intentioned change has enabled athletes to compete in weight classes where they don't belong. Moreover, it allows an undisciplined athlete to make a pig of himself before a bout, dry out excessively to make weight, and then put on huge amounts of water-weight up until fight time, which is counterproductive to his performance and boosts his risk of injury.

"Ideally, I recommend a week ahead of his bout, a fighter report to a specified location to undergo a physical and weigh-in," said Homansky. "He should be relatively close to the contractual weight. The fighter's nutrition and overall health could be assessed and recommendations made, and then have him examined and weighed again the day of the fight." Fewer injuries would be missed and weight class credibility would be upheld.

◆◆◆

Happily, there are other changes I could list. I believe all were carried out with an honorable objective in mind. But the effectiveness of each must be repeatedly reviewed to determine if the new rule has accomplished its intended goal. This is especially crucial when the guideline could raise the risks, as I believe to be the case with day before the fight weigh-ins.

Fans believe they have no role in improving safety. That couldn't be further from the truth. Placing pressure on commissions through e-mails or letters does make them reassess regulations. Fans complain about judging but rarely voice their opinion relevant to health standards. Think about this the next time you watch a bout. ■

Man vs.

PHOTO BY ANDY KROPA/GETTY IMAGES

BOYCOTT BALONEY
Manny simply fights whomever Arum tells him to fight, and Uncle Bob could care less if you don't like the Pacquiao-Mosley fight.

2010 was a lousy year all-around, whether you were a fish living in the Gulf of Mexico, an immigrant living in Arizona, or a single-termer-to-be living in the White House. But at least we had boxing to distract us from the world's problems, right? You might think the Baggadoccio is being facetious; considering 2010 wasn't a banner year for the Sweet Science overall, but the reality is that the sport seemed to be on the uptick in November and December. Relative to what was going on in the rest of the world, boxing was doing okay for itself.

That is, until Bob Arum capped off the year by telling the fans to sit on it and rotate and announced that the biggest star in the sport, Manny Pacquiao, would next be facing everybody's last choice, Shane Mosley. In fact, here were Arum's exact words: "I personally polled 1,000 people and asked who they wanted to see Manny fight next if Floyd Mayweather isn't available. Answers ranged from Juan Manuel Marquez to Sergio Martinez to a grizzly bear to that liquid-metal version of The Terminator. Three people voted for Shane Mosley: Shane, me, and my Mini-Me, Todd duBoef. I then threw out 997 votes, tallied the rest, and it was unanimous: Sugar Shane Mosley is the choice!"

Within moments after Arum made the fight official, a certain "b" word started to spread across the message boards. No, not the one that rhymes with "itch," although a few people did intimate that Arum's mother was one. The "b" word here is "boycott."

Since most serious fight fans are furious that Pacquiao's prime is being wasted in fights like this, his third in a row for which competitiveness can't be used as a selling point, there's a movement afoot to get everyone to skip Pacquiao-Mosley. The rebel army doesn't want to see Arum profit. It wants to see his theory that Mosley's

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/HOGAN PHOTOS/GBP

SOUR SUGAR
In his most recent outing, Mosley struggled to a 12-round draw with Sergio Mora in a monotonous fight. But it was still good enough to garner a huge payday versus "Pac-Man."

Boycott

name is all that matters proven wrong. And it wants the pay-per-view numbers to be low enough to convince Arum and Pacquiao to do the right thing next time.

Just one problem: Boycotts don't work. It's a simple numbers game. The anti-Mosley faction had the numbers prior to the fight being signed, but the Arummeister held all the cards and overruled the numbers. And as we all know, when fight night comes, the anti-Mosley faction will no longer have the numbers. The vocal majority will turn into a vocal minority because people will decide they don't want to miss a Pacquiao fight, no matter who the opponent is.

In the end, nobody can convince anybody else to boycott something. Each person will decide for themselves whether they want to see the fight. Maybe 100,000 hardcore fight fans who order almost every pay-per-view will skip this one. But they'll be counterbalanced by the half-million casual sports fans who'll say, "Hey, Sugar Shane! I know that name!" and order the fight without having a clue that Mosley was as spry as an arthritic elephant against Sergio Mora last time out.

Boycotts and protests rarely change anything. The Baggareeno was on the frontlines of a lot of protests in the '60s (hey, there was free love to be had, but you had to grow your hair out and pretend to support the cause in order to get it), and, even if you change a few minds, the arrogant jerks calling the shots will still be the arrogant jerks calling the shots.

In boxing, this notion of boycotting pay-per-views has been around since pretty much the dawn of pay-per-view. At first, fight fans were pissed that they were being asked to pay for something they had previously gotten for free, and so some of them thought if they didn't give in, pay-per-view would go away. How'd that work out?

For a while, PPV was reserved for the mega-events that everyone was dying to see. Before long, it got watered down like a cocktail at a downtown Vegas casino where the waitresses could pass for the Baggalooski's old bagg of a mother. The PPV boycott movement peaked in the early-2000s with the "Roycotts," a clever little term for refusing to pay for Roy Jones mismatches. It seems fight fans weren't thrilled with being asked to dip into their wallets to see the most gifted boxer in the world at the time take on Eric Harding and Julio Gonzalez. And yes, those fights flatlined on pay-per-view, but it had nothing to do with the Roycotts. And the poor numbers didn't change anything; HBO kept letting Jones get away with mismatches, whether they were on pay-per-view or "free" HBO. Now here we are almost a decade later, and every single one of Jones' irrelevant fights is on PPV.

Boycotting became a hot topic again last fall, when good ol' Arum rewarded glove-loader Antonio Margarito by giving him a shot at Pacquiao. Fans were outspoken in their refusal to watch. A few writers authored columns announcing they would be boycotting the fight. One even said he was walking away from boxing, and the Bagganacular would tell you who that was, but he honestly

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

MONEY MAKER
There were a lot of fans and media members who didn't like the Pacquiao-Margarito fight, but it still sold more than a million pay-per-views despite the criticism.

can't remember the no-talent blogger's name. Needless to say, this wasn't Howard Cosell announcing that he was fed up with the sport.

In the end, Pacquiao-Margarito sold 1.15 million pay-per-views, a sensational number for any fight, much less one that hardly anyone expected to be competitive and to which many were morally opposed. If you weren't sure about the pointlessness of trying to organize a pay-per-view boycott, there's all the proof you need. In fact, the boycott only

THE MONTHLY MAILBAGG

It's a new year, and you all know what that means: We're almost a full 12 months away from the next time we'll have to see Dick Clark in public, making us all feel uncomfortable and depressed. Oh well, we all get old. Thank goodness the fun of the Baggbekistan's Mailbagg never does:

PHOTO BY GRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

OUT COLD
Advisor Al Haymon tried to give Williams every edge he could think of, but it didn't hold. Martinez put "The Punisher" down face first for a second-round knockout.

Sir,

First of all, you are tops. To hell with the haters and those who honor them. You always tell it like it is, and, for that, you have my respect. I, as many others did, watched Sergio Martinez starch Paul Williams. I've always been a huge fan of boxing, and, if I am not mistaken, when a fighter is going to defend his title, he always enters the ring last and his name is announced last. This did not happen in this fight. Did I miss something? Did the rules change while I was in Afghanistan fighting those terrorist bastards? Your opinion, ol' Baggnificent One, means more than any other writer in this great magazine. What is your take on all this?

Jose "El Jefe" Hernandez

Jose,

El Baggiachi's Spanish isn't all that sharp, but based on the content of your e-mail, he can only assume "El Jefe" means "The Brown-Noser." You really positioned your lips squarely on the Bagg-a-donuts' rump, which isn't easy to do when the rump in question spends nearly every waking hour glued to either the couch or the crapper.

On to your question: What you missed while you were off fighting a futile and pointless war that's helping to bankrupt your country was Al Haymon squeezing his vice grip on HBO's beanbag ever so slightly tighter. Before he was going to let a monster like Martinez go anywhere near Williams a second time, Haymon needed to negotiate every possible edge, which included defecating on the grand tradition of the champion entering the ring and being introduced last. Rumor has it that the week after the fight, Haymon decreed that no HBO employees would be allowed to consume turkey on Thanksgiving, and wouldn't you know, Ross Greenburg carved up a lovely Tofurkey that night.

Tradition took a backseat in the Martinez-Williams fight, and that was unfortunate. But at least Haymon hasn't figured out how to rewrite the rulebook yet to disqualify fighters for knocking out his clients with perfect left hands.

AND THE STINGRAY GOES TO ...

Veteran Philadelphia clubfighter Dhafir "No Fear" Smith, who recently won a unanimous decision over former Olympian and former beltholder Jeff Lacy and didn't get nearly enough credit because everyone was too busy buzzing over how washed-up Lacy is.

Don't get the Baggluminum Foil wrong; Lacy is the poster boy for the cliché "how the mighty have fallen." (Well, either it's Lacy or it's THE RING's own Joe Santoliquito, who once was a competitive all-America powerlifter and now boasts the physique of a man who powerlifts hot wings and soft pretzels into his mouth until his arms cramp up.) So it makes sense for folks to focus on the "Lacy loses" angle rather than the "Smith wins" angle. But the Baggnificence and his Stingray Award are here to straighten that out.

Smith may have been an ugly 23-19-7 (4) coming into the fight, but he also was unbeaten in his previous four fights and wasn't unaccustomed to Stinging. His '07 campaign was particularly Sting-sational, when he beat 12-1 John Johnson, *Contender* alum Jonathan Reid, and onetime hot prospect Brandon Mitchem.

Smith is no world-beater and was certainly fortunate to be fighting 2010 Jeff Lacy rather than 2004 Jeff Lacy, but he's a tough Philly fighter who knows what he's doing in there—as you'd have to in order to survive 50 pro fights with only enough pop in your mitts to register four knockouts. He went to Lacy's hometown of St. Petersburg, Florida, and won a 12-round unanimous decision by wide scores. That's some major league Stingin'.

Yes, Lacy is as worn down as Ernest Borgnine's porn collection, but he wouldn't lose in his hometown to just any .500 fighter. He'd only lose to one like Smith who's a lot tougher and trickier than his record suggests.

served to feed the beast that is Bob Arum, as his postfight gloat-fests included acknowledgment of the boycotts to emphasize how impressive the PPV numbers were.

But still the boycotting continues. Right after Pacquiao-Mosley was announced, a web site called nowboxing.com (the overabundance of random boxing web sites is rapidly catching up to the overabundance of random alphabet titles) ran an article trying to organize a boycott. The author, one Pierre Grimm (which is French for "Peter Pessimist"), wrote, "So many boxing writers and fans are opposed to this fight, and, if Arum thinks our opinion doesn't matter, he might be in for a surprise when the pay-per-view numbers are below 500,000 buys."

Sorry, Petey, but if this fight does under 500,000 buys, the Bagghorner will trade in his beer and pork rinds for fruit smoothies and wheat germ. Pacquiao-Mosley will land somewhere right around a million buys because Manny's popularity is off the charts and Mosley is a name that people know. The Baggronium's estimate is that the fight will sell 1,105,278 buys. But if you factor in all three of the nowboxing.com readers, that number might settle at 1,105,275. Arum ain't losing any sleep over your boycott.

To all of you rabble-rousers out there, if you're really bored and have nothing better to do with your time than captain message board boycotts, then go for it. Just know that you're urinating into a strong headwind.

The Baggtastic isn't sure yet if he'll watch Pacquiao vs. Mosley. But if he skips it, it won't be because he's trying to make a statement and affect change. It will be because he simply doesn't give a crap about Pacquiao vs. Mosley.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

STICK TO BOXING
It's great to have Teddy Atlas and Joe Tessitore back for another season of *Friday Night Fights*, but we could do without the *MMA Live* blockheads.

Putting The "Eff" In *FNF*

For 13 years, ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* has been there for boxing fans. Sometimes the fights would stink; sometimes they'd start two hours late because the World Series of Tiddlywinks had gone into triple overtime. But you knew that, no matter what, on a weekly basis, you could pull up a stool at the bar with your old pals Brian Kenny and Teddy Atlas and just talk boxing. It was a safe haven for the hardcore fans of the Sweet Science.

That is, until 2011 began and ESPN decided to take our sacred little He-Man Woman Hater's Club and start welcoming chicks in.

You see, on the first show of the new year, *FNF* unveiled a new segment with three blockheads in a studio talking about mixed martial arts. Hmmm, the Baggaroolian doesn't recall a quick minute of hockey highlights ever working its way onto *NBA Live* or ESPN's precious golf coverage being interrupted for updates from the world of croquet. But for some reason, someone at ESPN has decided that boxing and MMA go together, so now we're getting a minute of gum flapping from this *MMA Live* crew every week.

It would be nice if the Bagghouser could tell you that ESPN's MMA programming features 60 seconds of promotion for *FNF*. But the reality is there hasn't been 60 seconds of promotion for *FNF* total in the last 13 years. Thumbs up to all the folks on the *FNF* crew who do a first-class job week in and week out. Thumbs down to all the folks who rank above them and continually treat boxing like a second-class sport. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

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LOOKING AHEAD

by Don Stewart

PHOTO BY HENNING BAGGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Is Magee Another Easy Mark For Bute?

When Showtime signed 168-pound star **Lucian Bute** to a three-fight deal last November, the partnership created plenty of buzz. It seemed to be the perfect pairing for both sides as it essentially ensured that Bute would get the winner of Showtime's "Super Six" super middleweight tournament in 2012.

The marriage got off to a bit of a rocky start, however, with late December's announcement that Bute will begin his new contract by facing Irish vet **Brian Magee** on March 19 in Bute's adopted hometown of Montreal, Canada. Boxing bloggers and message-board posters received it as warmly as fictional critics welcomed Aldous Snow's "African Child" in the comedy *Get Him To The Greek*.

"Another Ugly Mismatch for Lucian" was how one site summed it up. "Lucian Bute: A Joke, A Ducker," was the title on one message-board thread.

The Bute haters were already peeved about the Romanian native's previous two fights, a three-round blowout of a used-up **Edison Miranda** and a ninth-round stoppage of former *Contender* contestant **Jesse Brinkley**. The southpaw Magee, 34-3-1 (24), also appears to be vastly overmatched. He's on a 10-fight unbeaten streak and holds the European title but is 35 years old and absent from THE RING top 10.

Bute, 27-0 (22), will be 31 when he steps into the ring opposite Magee, and he appears to be nearing his prime, if he hasn't reached it already. Beating up on lesser caliber opponents isn't the best use of a fighter's peak days. Just ask **Roy Jones**.

In an interview with THE RING, Bute promoter **Jean Bedard** defended the selection of Magee, claiming he was the best opponent available. Bedard said his company, Interbox, offered WBO beltholder **Robert Stieglitz** nearly $750,000 to come to Montreal and WBA "regular" titlist **Dimitri Sartison** nearly $500,000, but neither accepted. Bedard said Team Bute's first choice was **Mikkel Kessler**, but the fourth-ranked Dane is still recovering from the eye injury that forced him to exit the Super Six.

NEXT FOR BUTE
Bute challenger Magee wins the vacant European title with TKO of Mads Larsen

Bedard also mentioned **Allan Green** and **Andre Dirrell**, but Green was just stopped by **Glen Johnson** in November, and Dirrell is still injured. Bute has already beaten sixth-ranked **Sakio Bika** and eighth-ranked **Librado Andrade**. The rest of THE RING top 10 is still involved in the Super Six. Outside the division, light heavyweights **Jean Pascal** and **Bernard Hopkins** could be headed for a rematch, and former middleweight champ **Kelly Pavlik** just recently finished a stint at the Betty Ford Clinic.

"Lucian wants to fight the best," Bedard said. "It was important for us to have a fight in March because we need to keep Lucian active. Our goal was to find the best available fighter for Lucian. Unfortunately, a lot of the guys we were looking at were not available. So for us, Magee was the best opponent available."

Magee's last loss came in May 2006, when **Carl Froch** stopped him in the 11th round in a fight that was close on two cards. The 1996 Olympian is also the first lefty Bute has faced since a near-shutout decision win against **Sergey Tatevosyan** in January 2007.

"For us, definitely Magee was the best guy to come to Montreal," Bedard said. "But we tried hard to get other guys. We hope these other guys will be available [next time].

"The big fights that are coming, we are very excited. Lucian is very excited. He's now preparing and thinking only of Magee. But I had discussions with Showtime for next year, what they're planning, and we're both excited about what's going to happen in this weight class and what lies ahead."

That's assuming some better-regarded opponents emerge. For now, with the exception of Magee's Irish fan base, few are excited about Bute's immediate future. ■

LISTEN UP

Canada's **Steve Molitor** will try to beat South Africa's **Takalani Ndlovu** for a third time in a bout scheduled to be held in Ndlovu's homeland. Molitor stopped Ndlovu in nine rounds in July 2007 and outpointed him via unanimous decision in March 2010 bout to capture the vacant IBF junior featherweight belt. The third bout was ordered as a mandatory by the IBF ... The Don King-Bob Arum rivalry will make a brief return as Top Rank-promoted **Miguel Cotto** defends his WBA junior middleweight belt March 12 against King-promoted **Ricardo Mayorga**. The fight will be offered on Showtime pay-per-view ... **Sergio Martinez**, the consensus 2010 Fighter of the Year, opens 2011 with a March 12 middleweight title defense against junior middleweight beltholder **Sergei Dzinziruk** on HBO.

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